

The

FLUXUS

Reader

EDITED BY KEN FRIEDMAN

AE ACADEMY EDITIONS

THE FLUXUS READER

Edited by KEN FRIEDMAN

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iv
<i>Ken Friedman</i> , Introduction: A Transformative Vision of Fluxus	viii
Part I THREE HISTORIES	
<i>Owen Smith</i> , Developing a Fluxable Forum: Early Performance and Publishing	3
<i>Simon Anderson</i> , Fluxus, Fluxion, Flushoe: The 1970s	22
<i>Hannah Higgins</i> , Fluxus Fortuna	31
Part II THEORIES OF FLUXUS	
<i>Ina Blom</i> , Boredom and Oblivion	63
<i>David T Doris</i> , Zen Vaudeville: A Medi(t)ation in the Margins of Fluxus	91
<i>Craig Saper</i> , Fluxus as a Laboratory	136
Part III CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES	
<i>Estera Milman</i> , Fluxus History and Trans-History: Competing Strategies for Empowerment	155
<i>Stephen C Foster</i> , Historical Design and Social Purpose: A Note on the Relationship of Fluxus to Modernism	166
<i>Nicholas Zurbrugg</i> , 'A Spirit of Large Goals': Fluxus, Dada and Postmodern Cultural Theory at Two Speeds	172
Part IV THREE FLUXUS VOICES	
<i>Larry Miller</i> , Transcript of the Videotaped <i>Interview with George Maciunas</i>	183
<i>Susan L Jarosi</i> , Selections from an Interview with Billie Maciunas	199
<i>Larry Miller</i> , Maybe Fluxus (A Para-Interrogative Guide for the Neoteric Transmuter, Tinder, Tinker and Totalist)	212
Part V TWO FLUXUS THEORIES	
<i>Dick Higgins</i> , Fluxus: Theory and Reception	217
<i>Ken Friedman</i> , Fluxus and Company	237
Part VI DOCUMENTS OF FLUXUS	
Fluxus Chronology: Key Moments and Events	257
A List of Selected Fluxus Art Works and Related Primary Source Materials	283
A List of Selected Fluxus Sources and Related Secondary Sources	296
Index	306

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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 V
TWO FLUXUS THEORIES

KEN FRIEDMAN: FLUXUS AND COMPANY¹

FLUXUS 1962

Ideas, Issues and Paradigms

The idea of Fluxus was born long before 1962. We see it in the philosophy of Heraclitus and we see in the idea that you cannot cross the same river twice. We find it in fourteenth-century Zen texts and we find it in the paradigms of science that began taking shape in the late 1800s.

René Block coined the term 'Fluxism' to refer to an idea. The Fluxus idea transcends a specific group of people, and the idea has been visible through history. While the Fluxus idea existed long before the specific group of people called Fluxus, the group gave Fluxism a tangible shape through the work of experimental artists, architects, composers and designers who created, published, exhibited and performed under the Fluxus label. The idea grew into a community larger than the group, a larger community that includes people whose ideas and work incorporate elements based on the Fluxus experiment. It also includes a community of individuals who themselves became important to the Fluxus group.

Fluxus evolved around a conscious use of model-making and paradigm formation. My purpose here is to discuss Fluxus and to analyse some of the models and paradigms that seem to me essential in understanding it.

There have been many parallels between Fluxus and science. New models in mathematics often precede and lead to new applications in physical science. So, too, paradigms in art emerge when the worldview is shifting. Shifts in vision transform culture and science as they reshape history. These shifts are visible in the shifting paradigms of art.

Examples and Contrasts

The decades in which Fluxus emerged were the decades in which the sciences of transdisciplinary complexity came into their own. Fluxus and intermedia were born just as technology shifted from electrical engineering to electronic engineering. The first computers used punch-cards and mechanical systems. Computation science was in its infancy along with early forms of evolutionary psychology and the neurosciences. Chaos studies had not yet emerged as a discipline, but the foundations of chaos studies were already in place.

Fluxus grew with the intermedia idea. It had strong foundations in music, Zen, design and architecture. Rather than pursuing technical – or simply technological – solutions, Fluxus artists tended to move in a philosophical vein, direct and subtle at the same time. This proved to be a blessing, steering clear of the dead-end solutions typical of the 'art and technology' craze.

While new paradigms engender new technology as well as new art, relatively few technologies have given birth to interesting art forms. Buckminster Fuller noted a three-decade time lag between innovative paradigms and their wide adoption. Many of the new disciplines have only now been around for thirty years. Some aren't yet a decade old. As a result, the time may not yet be ripe for their obvious application in visual art.

Electronic processors and video equipment did give rise to new art forms. They were obvious technologies that artists could exploit. More significant, the paradigms on which they operate are not new. Electronic music, for example, began with electrical equipment rather than the electronic equipment that is available today. Electronic music was called 'electronic music' because the term seemed more workable than 'electric music' or 'electrical music' would have been. The first electronic music was created with wired circuits and electrical tubes, not with transistors and computers. The most interesting early equipment for electronic music was closer to an old-fashioned telephone switchboard in appearance and operation than it was to today's modern desk-top computers. The equipment available to artists and composers in those days was analogue equipment, wired and arranged by hand, a far cry from the powerful work stations that now contain more computing power than even the biggest mainframes once had.

The past and present of electronic music offer merely one example. The technological applications of electronic art are still primitive, even if the paradigms are not, and it seems to me that video and the electronic arts are still in their primitive stage. In a way, video has just passed out of its Stone Age and into the Bronze Age.

Video is now a recognised art form, as electronic music, electrostatic printing, electrostatic transfer and electrostatic printmaking have become. The media are now distinct and simple but the artistic results are not often powerful or elegant. Too many artists are entranced with the physical qualities of the medium they use and unconscious about the ideas that they attempt to develop. Art is burdened by attention to physical media and plagued by a failure to consider the potential of intermedia.

The equipment available to artists today does far more physically than is really necessary. We see too many videos that are long on technique and short on content. Computerised graphic design often illustrates the problem. Graphic designers explore the capacity of a computer to set hundreds of complex graphic objects on a page with multiple layers and hitherto impossible effects while they remain unaware of such matters as legibility and basic communication theory. The technical power available to computer-based designers outstrips their design ability in many cases. The result has been an avalanche of complicated, trendy typography and fussy, mannerist design created to look up-to-date rather than to communicate. The most powerful use of the computer in science is to create elegant, simple solutions to complex problems. When artists use the mechanical power of the computer to complicate rather than to simplify, it suggests that they do not understand the paradigms of the new technology. They have merely learned to manipulate the equipment.

The art forms that will one day emerge from computation science and chaos studies have not yet reached the level of video and electronic music, as basic as they still are. The physical forms of computation science or chaos are not as simple or as obvious as electronic music or video. At present the technology dictates the medium and technological frenzy sometimes

inhibits the learning process. It may also be that evolution demands the creation of many dead-ends on the way to interesting art.

The computer-generated images presented today as computer art or the fractal images of chaos studies are simplistic presentations of an idea. They are laboratory exercises or displays of technical virtuosity, designed to test and demonstrate the media and the technology. They are the intellectual and artistic equivalent of the paint samples that interior designers use to plan out larger projects. They may be interesting and useful in some way, but only people shopping for paint find them relevant.

By contrast, Fluxus suggests approaches that are simple rather than simplistic. The level of complexity in any given work is determined by philosophical paradigms. It isn't dictated by available technology. This is an important difference in a technological age. It distinguishes Fluxus forms as humanistic forms – forms determined by the artist rather than by the tools. The idea of simplicity owes as much to the Fluxus refusal to distinguish between art and life as to the intellectual curiosity that characterises Fluxus artists.

Paradigms Are More Important than Technology

The paradigms of any complex, transformative era are its most interesting features. Paradigms being born today will transform the global environment tomorrow. This is the environment in which Fluxus took shape and the environment in which Fluxus continues to grow. It hasn't led to an art of technical applications, but to an art of subtle ideas. Some of those ideas have been complex, but few have been complicated. Many have been simple. Few have been simplistic.

The essence of Fluxus has been transformation. The key transformative issues in a society do not always attract immediate notice. Transformative issues involve paradigm shifts. When paradigms are shifting, the previous dominant information hierarchy holds the obvious focus of a society's attention until the shift is complete. One simple example of this phenomenon can be seen in the expectations that we had for videophone compared to what we thought of telefax. For almost three decades journalists have hailed videophone as the coming revolution in telecommunications. Videophone appeared to be a natural marriage of television and telephone. It was a great idea. It made for fascinating illustrated articles in magazines and great snippets on TV shows. By contrast, telefax was humble, almost primitive. You send a message, but you don't talk and see your message at the same time. On an emotional level, therefore, telefax seems closer to telegraph than television, nowhere near as exciting as videophone. In the long run, however, it didn't matter that telefax lacked excitement; telefax was useful. It was application-oriented and user-friendly. It was simple and flexible. As a result, telefax became the most profound development in communications technology of the 1980s. At first, the telefax was so obvious that it was almost overlooked. Videophone is such a dramatic idea that it held public interest long before becoming possible as a practical, cost-effective technology. It diverted public attention from the telefax while telefax quietly transformed the way we sent and received messages.

The same applies to Fluxus. Fluxus began to take shape in Europe, the United States and Japan during the 1950s. It started in the work and actions of many people. Their activity often went unnoticed at the time; and when it was noticed, people didn't give it much thought. Even so, the processes created and nurtured by the Fluxus community were new

paradigms for the consideration of art, architecture, music and design. The artists, composers, architects and designers who constituted the Fluxus community worked with simple ideas – ideas so simple that they were easy to ignore. As often happens in developing paradigms, simplicity is a focus for concentrated thinking. It generates depth, power and resonance. That is how Fluxus survived and why Fluxus was never just an art movement.

The environment also changes. Just as the telefax redefined the way that people communicate, new media will once again transform our way of sending and receiving messages. Telefax was developed before the widespread availability of the personal computer. Today, personal computers and the various ways of linking them are beginning to replace telefax – including computers that emulate a telefax. In a sense, the telefax that once seemed so revolutionary is beginning to appear as an entry-level technology. The Pony Express once redefined the world's understanding of message delivery speed, but it lasted only two years before it was replaced by the telegraph. The telegraph was later replaced by the telephone, an invention that was once thought of as a special kind of toy for transmitting musical concerts and news broadcasts.

Today, satellite-linked telephones, computer networks and e-mail are shaping a platform that will slowly encompass the Earth. This platform will eventually make videophone possible through a new technology unimagined by the original inventors of the videophone concept. Despite the growth of advanced technology, the relatively simple telefax remains useful and so do land-line telephones. Today, as in past times, there are situations in which older technologies are better suited to modern applications than the more advanced solutions. One example is the suitability of entry-level mobile phone systems for developing nations that use a more simple and less expensive technology than the GSM systems that are now standard in many European nations.

Some technologies and paradigms will probably never lose their value. Books are an example for reading. The human voice is an example for speaking and singing. These are examples of simple paradigms and technologies that are accessible and available under such a wide variety of options that they will always be useful for some applications. I like to think of Fluxus that way – as a useful series of paradigms and options.

Evolution and Ancestors

Fluxus was born at a shifting point in world-views. The era that the English-speaking world once called the Elizabethan Age is only now coming to a close. This was the age of the pirate kings – an age in which gunpowder technology permitted the Western nations to conquer and dominate the rest of the world.

The greatest portion of the world's wealth and power was once concentrated in Asia. A number of poor decisions on the part of Asian rulers created the context in which the European powers were virtually assured of global dominance, despite the relative youth of the European empires and cultures that were primitive in comparison with their Asian counterparts. Two of the most significant of these decisions were the mandated destruction of China's ocean-going fleets and the closing of Japan. These decisions were also two of the most foolish – folly because they were decisions made by powerful governments that finally weakened the power of their nations. In that sense, China and Japan transformed themselves from two of the world's most developed nations into nations that would later find themselves

at great disadvantage, primarily because they cut themselves off from the competition and evolution of a changing worldwide environment.

This was a far different situation than the situation of the nations and empires of India, Korea and Vietnam, all of which found themselves in problematic situations dictated more by historical circumstances than troubles brought about by specific and bad decisions. For any number of reasons, however, the empires of Asia, old, wealthy and powerful, were unable to innovate and compete effectively against the vigorous and often ruthless expansion of the Western powers. The Asian powers had their own ruthless dynasties. The triumph of the West did not occur because the West was willing to be immoral where the East was spiritual and unprepared to resist. The main issues were technological and economic: the West had a more effective technology than the East had, a technology that was coupled to a culture more able to innovate and initiate change. That moment essentially dictated the shape of world power and the global economic system for roughly five centuries. Those five centuries are now coming to an end.

A new era is taking shape now. We do not yet have a name for the new era, but it is clear that a new time is emerging. Asia is once again a wealthy, powerful region, expanding and transforming the world economy. Led first by Japan, and later by Korea and Taiwan, with mainland China about to emerge and India following after, Asia will soon be the world's largest regional economy. The Asia-Pacific region already equals Europe and the United States in wealth. It may soon equal them in power and geopolitical influence. There is every reason to believe that the Asia-Pacific region (possibly including Australia and North America) will play the kind of role in the twenty-first century that Europe played from the seventeenth to the first half of the twentieth century and that America played from the early twentieth century on. The consequences of this transformation will be good and bad. The degree to which the transformation will work good or bad results on individuals and societies will depend on who they are, on where they are and on their viewpoint. Whether the changes are good or bad, however, the moment in which the new era takes shape will be a time-based boundary state.

Boundary states in ecological systems give rise to interesting life forms. Transition times in history give rise to interesting culture forms.

The first signs of this global transformation began in the last century. The old era could be said to have ended in 1815 with the Treaty of Vienna that closed the Napoleonic Wars. That was the last real moment of the old Europe, the old diplomacy, the old empires. The putative revolutions of the mid-century, the revolutions that failed, were the beginning of the new nationalism, a clear sign that the European empires were doomed. Even though they didn't know it yet, the Hapsburgs were in trouble, as were the Romanovs, the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha Windsors-to-be and the Hohenzollerns of Prussia, whose imperial aspirations were essentially doomed even before their empire was cobbled together by the Iron Chancellor. The final result of the twentieth century could not have been predicted at that time but change was on the horizon. Technology, economy and history doomed the static and slow-moving empires with all their cultural baggage.

The transformative zone in the cultural ecology that ushered in our century became visible in the 1890s with the work of writers, artists and composers such as Alfred Jarry, Pablo Picasso, Douanier Rousseau and Erik Satie. The tradition they established became a kind of

left-handed, Tantric approach to art, contrarian and often hermetic. It was a transnational art in an era that would become increasingly national under the influence of the national movements in art and music that accompanied the break-up of the empires and the liberation of conquered and colonised nations.

As a result, this tradition in art excited and stimulated young artists, opened the doors to many cultures and at the same time inevitably came into conflict with the very cultures they enlivened. Only the moment of international modernism made Hollywood possible, for example, and yet Hollywood movies grew and blossomed as a typically American art form – a cultural innovation as boldly ethnocentric as the music of Grieg and Sibelius, as peculiarly archetypal in their national expression as the paintings of Matisse or Gaudi's architecture. The end result was that this century saw two arts and two cultures growing side by side. One was public, heroic and national in inclination. The other was intellectual, hermetic and global in tone.

These two traditions challenged and informed each other, yet for a host of reasons, they remained separate; separated as much by the demands of politics and economics as by the reality of art. Take the case of Abstract Expressionism, for example. This was the first art movement to exert worldwide influence after America took on the international leadership that the disintegrated European empires and their impoverished heirs could no longer afford.

Europe and Asia informed the best sentiments of Abstract Expressionism. It was an art that would have been impossible without the twin influences of Surrealism and oriental culture on America. When it came time for America to stand for its own in the international art world, however, politics, economics and political economics dictated that Abstract Expressionism be treated as some kind of uniquely American triumph. Viewed in one way, this was the voice of a young nation come into its own. Viewed another way, this was history chasing its own tail. The triumph of American painting was heralded by myopic art critics. Some of them were well informed in the narrow terms of art history, but they were conveniently ignorant of larger cultural history. Most of them managed to overlook the fact that the art market and art history are generally – and only temporarily – dominated by the nation that currently holds the balance of power in the geopolitical and economic terms. This view served the political purposes of the American government. There was no purpose to be served by making clear just how impossible this artistic achievement would have been without the defeated Japan, the problematic China, or an occasionally fractious Europe that America was attempting to dominate and lead. Thus the acolytes of Abstract Expressionism ballyhooed the grandeur of the New York painters, treating everything up to that moment as the prelude to their triumph. One cannot entirely blame America for this attitude. After all, the Greeks, the Italians, the Dutch, the British and the Japanese, not to mention the French, had done so themselves, on behalf of their several republics and empires.

It is the other tradition that influenced Fluxus, a tradition that has inevitably been neglected because it is anti-nationalistic in sentiment and tone and practised by artists who are not easily used as national flag-bearers. Individual artists such as Marcel Duchamp and John Cage are accurately seen as ancestors of Fluxus, but ideas played a larger role than individuals. Russian revolutionary art groups such as LEF were an influence on some. For others, De Stijl and the Bauhaus philosophy were central. The idea that one can be an artist and – at the same time – an industrialist, an architect or a designer is a key to the way one can

view Fluxus work and the artist's role in society. It is as important to work in the factory or the urban landscape as in the museum. It is important to be able to shift positions and to work in both environments.

Dada was further from Fluxus in many ways than either De Stijl or Bauhaus. The seeming relationship between Fluxus and Dada is more a matter of appearances than of deep structure. Robert Filliou pointed this out in his 1962 statement making clear that Fluxus is not Dadaist in its intentions. Dada was explosive, irreverent and made much use of humour, as Fluxus has also done. But Dada was nihilistic, a millenarian movement in modernist terms. Fluxus was constructive. Fluxus was founded on principles of creation, of transformation and its central method sought new ways to build.

Jean Sellem asserts that the Fluxus tradition is, indeed, a tradition rooted in hermetic philosophy and even in the hidden traditions of such movements as Kabbalah and Tantra. I cannot quite agree with him, yet I think he brings up a point that offers valid ways to understand Fluxus. So, too, this assertion works well with some of the ways in which Fluxus works. Fluxus aspires to serve everyone, but it demands a certain kind of perspective and commitment. Anyone can have it, but everyone must work to get it. The premises and the results are simple; the path from the premises to the goal can be difficult.

One way or another, though, Fluxus is a creature of the fluid moment. The transformative zone where the shore meets the water is simple, and complex, too. The entire essence of chaos theory and the new sciences of complexity suggest that profoundly simple premises can create rich, complex interaction and lead to surprising results. Finding the simple elements that interact to shape our complex environment is the goal of much science. In culture, too, and in human behaviour, simple elements combine in many ways. On the one hand, we seek to understand and describe them. On the other, we seek to use them. The fascination and delight of transformation states in boundary zones is the way in which they evolve naturally.

When, How and Who

The formal date given for the birth of the Fluxus group is the year 1962. Several people in Europe, Japan and the United States had been working in parallel art forms and pursuing many of the same ideas in their work. The Lithuanian-born architect and designer George Maciunas had tried to present their work in a gallery and through a magazine named *Fluxus*. The gallery folded and the magazine never appeared. A festival was planned in Wiesbaden, Germany, in 1962, featuring the work of many of the artists and composers whose work had been scheduled for publication in the magazine. The idea of the festival was to raise money to publish the magazine, so it was called the Fluxus Festival. The German press referred to the participants by the name of the festival, calling them *die Fluxus Leute*, the 'Fluxus people'. That's how a specific group of artists came to be called the Fluxus group.

The artists in Wiesbaden included Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Arthur K pcke, George Maciunas, Nam June Paik, Benjamin Patterson, Karl Erik Welin, Emmett Williams, and Wolf Vostell. They were already in contact with artists and composers such as George Brecht, Jackson Mac Low, La Monte Young, Ben Vautier and with many of the individuals whose work was soon to appear in *An Anthology*.

While Maciunas' festival gave Fluxus its name, many of the artists and composers involved in the festival had known and worked with each other long before 1962. The New

York Audio-Visual Group, for example, had been active since 1956. In Germany, a similar group of artists and composers had been working together equally as long. Maciunas' projects offered these people a forum. For many of them, Fluxus was a forum and a meeting place without ideological or artistic conditions and without a defined artistic programme.

After Wiesbaden, artists who had been working on similar principles came into contact with others who were active in the Fluxus community. Some of them became active in the Fluxus group. Most of them were working on a similar basis and they took part in Fluxus because of what they had already done. These artists were to include Eric Andersen, Joseph Beuys, Giuseppe Chiari, Henning Christiansen, Philip Corner, Robert Filliou, Bengt af Klintberg, Yoko Ono, Willem de Ridder, Takako Saito, Tomas Schmit, Daniel Spoerri, Robert Watts, La Monte Young and others. Some, like La Monte, had been in touch with George long before Wiesbaden. The group kept growing through the mid-1960s, eventually coming to include other artists such as Milan Knizak, Geoff Hendricks, Larry Miller, Yoshi Wada, Jean Dupuy and myself.

There were thus two groups of original Fluxus members. The first group was comprised of the nine who were at Wiesbaden. The second group included those who came into Fluxus in the years after, distinguished by innovative work that led the others to welcome them.

Fluxus has been able to grow because it has had room for dialogue and transformation. It has been able to be born and reborn several times in different ways. The fluid understanding of its own history and meaning; the central insistence on dialogue and social creativity rather than on objects and artefacts have enabled Fluxus to remain alive on the several occasions that Fluxus has been declared dead.

TWELVE FLUXUS IDEAS

Core Issues

There are twelve core issues that can be termed the basic ideas of Fluxus. In 1981 Dick Higgins wrote a list of nine criteria² that he suggested as central to Fluxus. He stated that a work or a project is Fluxist to the degree that it fulfils a significant number of criteria, and that the more criteria any one piece fills, the more Fluxus in intention and realisation it is. I found Dick's list a useful model and expanded the list to twelve. I feel that my ideas are much the same as Dick's, but I changed some of the terms to account more precisely for the nuances of meaning I feel are vital. There has been some confusion over the use of the term 'criteria'. Dick and I both used the term in the original sense of characteristics or traits, not standards of judgement. In short, we intended description, not prescription.

The Twelve Fluxus Ideas are:

1 *Globalism* 2 *Unity of art and life* 3 *Intermedia* 4 *Experimentalism* 5 *Chance* 6 *Playfulness* 7 *Simplicity* 8 *Implicativeness* 9 *Exemplativism* 10 *Specificity* 11 *Presence in time* 12 *Musicality*.

Globalism

Globalism is central to Fluxus. It embraces the idea that we live on a single world, a world in which the boundaries of political states are not identical with the boundaries of nature or culture. Dick Higgins' list used the term 'internationalism'. Higgins referred to Fluxus' complete lack of interest in the national origin of ideas or of people, but internationalism can

also be a form of competition between nations. War is now unacceptable as a form of national expression. Economic interests on a global scale erase national boundaries, too. The only areas in which nations can push themselves forward as national-interest groups with identities defined against the identities of other nations are sports and culture. The international culture festivals are sometimes like football championships where stars and national politicians push against each other with all the vigour and savagery of simulated warfare. Fluxus, however, encourages dialogue among like minds, regardless of nation. Fluxus welcomes the dialogue of unlike minds when social purposes are in tune.

In the 1960s, the concept of internationalism was expressive. The United Nations was young, the cold war was an active conflict, and mass political groups operating as national-interest groups seemed to offer a way to establish global dialogue. Today, 'globalism' is a more precise expression. It's not simply that boundaries no longer count, but that in the most important issues, there are no boundaries.

A democratic approach to culture and to life is a part of the Fluxus view of globalism. A world inhabited by individuals of equal worth and value suggests – or requires – a method for each individual to fulfil his or her potential. This, in turn, suggests a democratic context within which each person can decide how and where to live, what to become, how to do it.

The world as it is today has been shaped by history, and today's conditions are determined in great part by social and economic factors. While the Western industrialised nations and some developing nations are essentially democratic, we do not live in a democratic world. Much of the world is governed by tyrannies, dictatorships or anarchic states. Finding the path from today's world to a democratic world raises important questions, complex questions, that lie outside the boundaries of this essay. Nevertheless, democracy seems to most of us an appropriate goal and a valid aspiration. It is fair to say that many Fluxus artists see their work as a contribution to that world.

Some of the Fluxus work was intended as a direct contribution to a more democratic world. Joseph Beuys' projects for direct democracy, Nam June Paik's experiments with television, Robert Filliou's programmes, Dick Higgins' *Something Else Press*, Milan Knizak's *Aktual* projects, George Maciunas' multiples and my own experiments with communication and research-based art forms were all direct attempts to bring democratic expression into art and to use art in the service of democracy. The artists who created these projects wrote essays and manifestoes that made this goal clear. The views took different starting points, sometimes political, sometimes economic, sometimes philosophical, sometimes even mystical or religious. As a result, this is one aspect of Fluxus that can be examined and understood in large global terms, and these terms are given voice in the words of the artists themselves. Other Fluxus projects had similar goals, though not all have been put forward in explicit terms.

Concurrent with a democratic standpoint is an anti-elitist approach. When Nam June Paik read an earlier version of the *Twelve Fluxus Ideas*, he pointed out that the concept of anti-elitism was missing. I had failed to articulate the linkage between globalism, democracy and anti-elitism. In fact, one cannot achieve a humanistic global community without democracy or achieve democracy in a world controlled by an elite. In this context, one must define the term 'elitism' to mean a dominant elite class based on inherited wealth or power or based on the ability of dominant minorities to incorporate new members in such a way that

their wealth and power will be preserved. This is quite contrary to an open or entrepreneurial society in which the opportunity to advance is based on the ability to create value in the form of goods or services.

The basic tendency of elitist societies to restrict opportunity is why elite societies eventually strangle themselves. Human beings are born with the genetic potential for talent and the potential to create value for society without regard to gender, race, religion or other factors. While some social groups intensify or weaken certain genetic possibilities through preferential selection based on social factors, the general tendency is that any human being can in theory represent any potential contribution to the whole. A society that restricts access to education or to the ability to shape value makes it impossible for the restricted group to contribute to the larger society. This means that a restrictive society will finally cripple itself in comparison to or in competition with a society in which anyone can provide service to others to the greatest extent possible.

For example, a society which permits all of its members to develop and use their talents to the fullest extent will always be a richer and more competitive society than a society which denies some members education because of race, religion or social background. Modern societies produce value through professions based on education. Educated people create the material wealth that enable all members of a society to flourish through such disciplines as physics, chemistry or engineering. It is nearly impossible to become a physicist, a chemist or an engineer without an education. Those societies that make it impossible for a large section of the population to be educated for these professions must statistically reduce their chances of innovative material progress in comparison with those societies that educate every person with the aptitude for physics, chemistry or engineering.

Fluxus, however, proposes a world in which it is possible to create the greatest value for the greatest number of people. This finds its parallel in many of the central tenets of Buddhism. In economic terms, it leads to what could be called Buddhist capitalism or green capitalism. In the arts, the result can be confusing. The arts are a breeding ground and a context for experiment. The world uses art to conduct experiments of many kinds – thought experiments and sense experiments. At their best, the arts are a cultural wetlands, a breeding ground for evolution and for the transmutation of life forms. In a biologically rich dynamic system, there are many more opportunities for evolutionary dead-ends than for successful mutation. As a result, there must be and there is greater latitude for mistakes and transgressions in the world of the arts than in the immediate and results-oriented world of business or social policy. This raises the odd possibility that a healthy art world may be a world in which there is always more bad art than good. According to some, the concept of bad art or good is misleading: this was Filliou's assertion, the point he made with his series of *bien fait, mal fait* works.

Ultimately, the development and availability of a multiplicity of works and views permits choice, progress and development. This is impossible in a centrally planned, controlled society. The democratic context of competing visions and open information makes this growth possible. Access to information is a basis for this development, which means that everyone must have the opportunity to shape information and to use it. Just as short-term benefits can accrue in entropic situations, so it is possible for individuals and nations to benefit from the short-term monopoly of resources and opportunities. Thus the

urge for elitism based on social class and for advantage based on nationalism. In the long run, this leads to problems that disadvantage everyone. Fluxism suggests globalism, democracy and anti-elitism as intelligent premises for art, for culture and for long-term human survival.

Paik's great 1962 manifesto, *Utopian Laser Television*, pointed in this direction. He proposed a new communications medium based on hundreds of television channels. Each channel would 'narrowcast' its own programme to an audience of those who wanted the programme without regard to the size of the audience. It would make no difference whether the audience was made of two viewers or two billion. It wouldn't even matter whether the programmes were intelligent or ridiculous, commonly comprehensible or perfectly eccentric. The medium would make it possible for all information to be transmitted, and each member of each audience would be free to select or choose his own programming based on a menu of infinitely large possibilities.

Even though Paik wrote his manifesto for television rather than computer-based information, he predicted the worldwide computer network and its effects. As technology advances to the point where computer power will make it possible for the computer network to carry and deliver full audiovisual programming such as movies or videotapes, we will be able to see Paik's *Utopian Laser Television*. That is the ultimate point of the Internet with its promise of an information-rich world.

As Buckminster Fuller suggested, it must eventually make sense for all human beings to have access to the multiplexed distribution of resources in an environment of shared benefits, common concern and mutual conservation of resources.

Unity of Art and Life

The *unity of art and life* is central to Fluxism. When Fluxus was established, the conscious goal was to erase the boundaries between art and life. That was the sort of language appropriate to the time of Pop Art and of Happenings. The founding Fluxus circle sought to resolve what was then seen as a dichotomy between art and life. Today, it is clear that the radical contribution Fluxus made to art was to suggest that there is no boundary to be erased.

Beuys articulated it well in suggesting that everyone is an artist, as problematic as that statement appears to be. Another way to put it is to say that art and life are part of a unified field of reference, a single context. Stating it that way poses problems, too, but the whole purpose of Fluxus is to go where the interesting problems are.

Intermedia

Intermedia is the appropriate vehicle for Fluxism. Dick Higgins introduced the term 'intermedia' to the modern world in his famous 1966 essay. He described an art form appropriate to people who say there are no boundaries between art and life. If there cannot be a boundary between art and life, there cannot be boundaries between art forms and art forms. For purposes of history, of discussion, of distinction, one can refer to separate art forms, but the meaning of intermedia is that our time often calls for art forms that draw on the roots of several media, growing into new hybrids.

Imagine, perhaps, an art form that is comprised 10% of music, 25% of architecture, 12% of drawing, 18% of shoemaking, 30% of painting and 5% of smell. What would it be like?

How would it work? How would some of the specific art works appear? How would they function? How would the elements interact? This is a thought experiment that yields interesting results. Thoughts like this have given rise to some of the most interesting art works of our time.

Experimentalism

Fluxus applied the scientific method to art. *Experimentalism*, *research orientation* and *iconoclasm* were its hallmarks. Experimentalism doesn't merely mean trying new things. It means trying new things and assessing the results. Experiments that yield useful results cease being experiments and become usable tools, like penicillin in medicine or imaginary numbers in mathematics.

The research orientation applies not only to the experimental method, but to the ways in which research is conducted. Most artists, even those who believe themselves experimentalists, understand very little about the ways ideas develop. In science, the notion of collaboration, of theoreticians, experimenters and researchers working together to build new methods and results, is well established. Fluxus applied this idea to art. Many Fluxus works are the result of numbers of artists active in dialogue. Fluxus artists are not the first to apply this method, but Fluxus is the first art movement to declare this way of working as an entirely appropriate method for use over years of activity rather than as the occasional diversion. Many Fluxus works are still created by single artists, but from the first to the present day, you find Fluxus artists working together on projects where more than one talent can be brought to bear.

Iconoclasm is almost self-evident. When you work in an experimental way in a field as bounded by restrictions and prejudices as art, you have got to be willing to break the rules of cultural tradition.

Chance

One key aspect of Fluxus experimentation is *chance*. The methods – and results – of chance occur over and over again in the work of Fluxus artists. There are several ways of approaching chance. Chance, in the sense of aleatoric or random chance, is a tradition with a legacy going back to Duchamp, to Dada and to Cage. Much has been made of this tradition in writings about Fluxus, perhaps more than is justified, but this is understandable in the cultural context in which Fluxus appeared. By the late 1950s the world seemed to have become too routinised, and opportunities for individual engagement in the great game of life too limited. In America, this phenomenon was noted in books such as *The Organisation Man*, in critiques of 'the silent generation', and in studies such as *The Lonely Crowd*. The entire artistic and political programme of the beatniks was built on opposition to routine. Random chance, a way to break the bonds, took on a powerful attraction, and for those who grew up in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it still has the nostalgic aroma that hot rods and James Dean movies hold for others. Even so, random chance was more useful as a technique than as a philosophy.

There is also evolutionary chance. In the long run, evolutionary chance plays a more powerful role in innovation than random chance. Evolutionary chance engages a certain element of the random. Genetic changes occur, for example, in a process that is known as

random selection. New biological mutations occur at random under the influence of limited entropy – for example, when radiation affects the genetic structure. This is a technical degeneration of the genetic code, but some genetic deformations actually offer good options for survival and growth. When one of these finds an appropriate balance between the change and the niche in which it finds itself, it does survive to become embodied in evolutionary development.

This has parallels in art and in music, in human cultures and societies. Something enters the scene and changes the worldview we previously held. That influence may be initiated in a random way. It may begin in an unplanned way, or it may be the result of signal interference to intended messages, or it may be the result of a sudden insight. Any number of possibilities exist. When the chance input is embodied in new form, however, it ceases to be random and becomes evolutionary. That is why chance is closely allied to experimentation in Fluxus. It is related to the ways in which scientific knowledge grows, too.

Playfulness

Playfulness has been part of Fluxus since the beginning. Part of the concept of playfulness has been represented by terms such as ‘jokes’, ‘games’, ‘puzzles’ and ‘gags’. This role of gags in Fluxus has sometimes been overemphasised. This is understandable. Human beings tend to perceive patterns by their gestalt, focusing on the most noticeable differences. When Fluxus emerged, art was under the influence of a series of attitudes in which art seemed to be a liberal, secular substitute for religion. Art was so heavily influenced by rigidities of conception, form and style that the irreverent Fluxus attitude stood out like a loud fart in a small elevator. The most visible aspect of the irreverent style was the emphasis on the gag. There is more to humour than gags and jokes, and there is more to playfulness than humour. Play comprehends far more than humour. There is the play of ideas, the playfulness of free experimentation, the playfulness of free association and the play of paradigm shifting that are as common to scientific experiment as to pranks.

Simplicity

Simplicity, sometimes called ‘*parsimony*’, refers to the relationship of truth and beauty. Another term for this concept is ‘elegance’. In mathematics or science, an elegant idea is that idea which expresses the fullest possible series of meanings in the most concentrated possible statement. That is the idea of Occam’s Razor, a philosophical tool which states that a theory that accounts for all aspects of a phenomenon with the fewest possible terms will be more likely to be correct than a theory that accounts for the same phenomenon using more (or more complex) terms. From this perspective of philosophical modelling, Copernicus’ model of the solar system is better than Ptolemy’s – must be better – because it accounts for a fuller range of phenomena in fewer terms. Parsimony, the use of frugal, essential means, is related to that concept.

This issue was presented in Higgins’ original list as ‘minimalism’, but the minimalism has come to have a precise meaning in the world of art. While some of the Fluxus artists like La Monte Young can certainly be called minimalists, the intention and the meaning of their minimalism is very different than the Minimalism associated with the New York art school of that name. I prefer to think of La Monte as parsimonious. His work is a frugal concentration

of idea and meaning that fits his long spiritual pilgrimage, closer to Pandit Pran Nath than to Richard Serra.

Simplicity of means, perfection of attention, are what distinguish this concept in the work of the Fluxus artists.

Implicativeness

Implicativeness means that an ideal Fluxus work implies many more works. This notion is close to and grows out of the notion of elegance and parsimony. Here, too, you see the relationship of Fluxus to experimentalism and to the scientific method.

Exemplativism

Exemplativism is the principle that Dick Higgins outlined in another essay, the 'Exemplativist Manifesto'. Exemplativism is the quality of a work exemplifying the theory and meaning of its construction. While not all Fluxus works are exemplative, there has always been a feeling that those pieces which are exemplative are in some way closer to the ideal than those which are not. You could say, for example, that exemplativism is the distinction between George Brecht's poetic proposals and Ray Johnson's – and probably shows why Brecht is in the Fluxus circle while Johnson, as close to Fluxus as he is, has never really been a part of things.

Specificity

Specificity has to do with the tendency of a work to be specific, self-contained and to embody all its own parts. Most art works rely on ambiguity, on the leaking away of meanings to accumulate new meanings. When a work has specificity, it loads meaning quite consciously. In a sense, this may seem a contradiction in an art movement that has come to symbolise philosophical ambiguity and radical transformation, but it is a key element in Fluxus.

Presence in Time

Many Fluxus works take place *in time*. This has sometimes been referred to by the term 'ephemeral', but the terms 'ephemerality' and 'duration' distinguish different qualities of time in Fluxus. It is appropriate that an art movement whose very name goes back to the Greek philosophers of time and to the Buddhist analysis of time and existence in human experience should place great emphasis on the element of time in art.

The ephemeral quality is obvious in the brief Fluxus performance works, where the term ephemeral is appropriate, and in the production of ephemera, fleeting objects and publications with which Fluxus has always marked itself. But Fluxus works often embody a different sense of duration as in musical compositions lasting days or weeks, performances that take place in segments over decades, even art works that grow and evolve over equally long spans. Time – the great condition of human existence – is a central issue in Fluxus and in the work that artists in the Fluxus circle create.

Musicality

Musicality refers to the fact that many Fluxus works are designed as scores, as works which can be realised by artists other than the creator. While this concept may have been born in the fact that many Fluxus artists were also composers, it signifies far more. The events, many

object instructions, game and puzzle works – even some sculptures and paintings – work this way. This means that you can own a George Brecht piece by carrying out one of Brecht's scores. If that sounds odd, you might ask if you can experience Mozart simply by listening to an orchestra play one of Mozart's scores. The answer is that you can. Perhaps another orchestra or Mozart himself might have given a better rendition, but it is still Mozart's work. This, too, is the case with a Brecht or a Knizak or a Higgins that is created to be realised from a score.

The issue of musicality has fascinating implications. The mind and intention of the creator are the key element in the work. The issue of the hand is only germane insofar as the skill of rendition affects the work: in some conceptual works, even this is not an issue. Musicality is linked to experimentalism and the scientific method. Experiments must operate in the same manner. Any scientist must be able to reproduce the work of any other scientist for an experiment to remain valid. As with other issues in Fluxus, this raises interesting problems. Collectors want a work with hand characteristics, so some Fluxus works imply their own invalidity for collectors.

Musicality suggests that the same work may be realised several times, and in each state it may be the same work, even though it is a different realisation of the same work. This bothers collectors who think of 'vintage' works as works located in a certain, distant era. The concept of 'vintage' is useful only when you think of it in the same way you think of wine: 1962 may be a great vintage, 1966, too, but it may not be until 1979 or 1985 that another great vintage occurs. If you think of the composers and conductors who have given us great interpretations of past work, say a complete Beethoven cycle or a series of Brahms concertos, then, a decade or two later, gave a dramatically different, yet equally rich interpretation of the same work, you will see why the concept of vintage can only be appropriate for Fluxus when it is held to mean what it means in wine. You must measure the year by the flavour, not the flavour by the year.

Musicality is a key concept in Fluxus. It has not been given adequate attention by scholars or critics. Musicality means that anyone can play the music. If deep engagement with the music, with the spirit of the music is the central focus of this criterion, then musicality may be *the* key concept in Fluxus. It is central to Fluxus because it embraces so many other issues and concepts: the social radicalism of Maciunas in which the individual artist takes a secondary role to the concept of artistic practice in society, the social activism of Beuys when he declared that we are all artists; the social creativity of Knizak in opening art into society; the radical intellectualism of Higgins and the experimentalism of Flynt. All of these and more appear in the full meaning of musicality.

FLUXUS AFTER FLUXUS

After Maciunas

Discussions about Fluxus often focus on George Maciunas, but there is no question of continuing Maciunas' role. George Maciunas was unique, and had a unique way of doing things and a unique place in the affections of everyone who knew him, but thinking of him as the single central figure in Fluxus is a mistake.

Between 1962 and the early 1970s Maciunas was Fluxus' editorial and festival organiser.

He held a role that could be compared to the role of a chairperson. When it became evident, even to George himself, that others had key roles to play if Fluxus was to grow, he loosened his notion of central control dramatically. It became far more important to him to spread Fluxism as a social action than to dictate the artistic terms of every Fluxus artist. This is evident if you see that Maciunas considered David Mayor a member of the Fluxcore, even though Mayor was quite different to Maciunas in his artistic choices.

By the 1970s, George Maciunas was no longer as active in publishing and organising for Fluxus as he had been a few years earlier. For example, while there were Fluxus evenings and occasional Fluxus presentations, Maciunas organised no major festivals after David Mayor finished the Fluxshoe.

In 1966 Maciunas had appointed several others as his co-directors. Fluxus South was directed by Ben Vautier in Nice, Fluxus East by Milan Knizak and I directed Fluxus West. Some have tried to make a point that 'Fluxus East wasn't Fluxus', as though only Maciunas was Fluxus. That isn't the case: Maciunas authorised us to speak for Fluxus, to represent Fluxus, to manage publications, to dispense copyright permission, and to act in every respect on behalf of Fluxus.

While Maciunas did repudiate people in the early 1960s, even attempting to expel or purge people from Fluxus, this was not how he behaved a few years later. It is a disservice to George Maciunas to present him through the image of a petty (if lovable) tyrant, a cross between an artistic Stalin and a laughable Breton. This notion belittles Maciunas' depth and capacity as a human being, his ability to find more effective ways of working and to find ways to grow.

George Maciunas was a fabulous organisational technologist and a great systematic thinker, but he was not comfortable working with people in the million unsystematic ways that people demand to work. This was why he changed his working method by the mid-1960s and began to share the leadership role. That is how Fluxus took new forms and grew.

He became comfortable letting others develop Fluxus in other ways while giving advice and criticism from time to time. That's how Fluxus found its feet in England in the 1970s. That's how new Fluxus activists emerged in the States and in Europe and how they kept the ideas and action alive. It is why Fluxus has been continuously active for nearly forty years.

The first Fluxus disappeared a long time ago. It replaced itself with the many forms of Fluxus that came after. The many varieties of Fluxus activity took on their own life and had a significant history of their own. It is unrealistic and historically inaccurate to imagine a Fluxus controlled by one man. Fluxus was co-created by many people and it has undergone a continuous process of co-creation and renewal for four decades.

Fluxus Today

Fluxus today is not the Fluxus that has sometimes been considered as an organised group and sometimes referred to as a movement. Fluxus is a forum, a circle of friends, a living community. Fluxism as a way of thinking and working is very much alive.

What was unique about Fluxus as a community was that we named ourselves. We found and kept our own name. Art critics named Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Minimalism and Conceptualism. Fluxus named Fluxus. The German press took our name and fell in love with it, but it was our name to begin with. What made it Fluxus was that it wasn't confined to

art and it was perhaps this that saved us from being named by others. If it locked us out of the art market on many occasions, it made it possible for us to make interesting art on our own terms.

In the last twenty years interest in Fluxus has gone through two, maybe three cycles of growth and neglect. We are still here, still doing what we want to do, and still coming together from time to time under the rubric of Fluxus. Since this is exactly what happened during the 1960s and 1970s, it is clear that Fluxus did not die at some magical date in the past. If you read your way down the many lists of Fluxus artists who were young and revolutionary back in the 1960s, the 1990s have shown many of them to be transformative and evolutionary. They transformed the way that the world thinks about art, and they transformed the relationship between art and the world around it.

The Fluxus dialogue has taken on a life of its own. A Fluxism vital enough to continue in its own right was exactly what people intended at the beginning, though this has sometimes had consequences that startled them as much as anyone else. If it hasn't happened in exactly the ways that they planned, this is because there are no boundaries between art and life. What counts is the fact that it happened.

NOTES

- 1 This essay was originally written for the exhibition *Fluxus and Company* at Emily Harvey Gallery in 1989. It has been widely reprinted in revised versions and in various translations since then.
- 2 Dick Higgins, 'Fluxus: Theory and Reception' (1982); included in this volume, p 217.