Fluxus

and the Essential Questions of Life

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Fluxus

and the Essential Questions of Life

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FLUX
Corsage
By
KEN
Friedman

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Fluxus: A Laboratory of Ideas

Ken Friedman

In 1979, Harry Ruhé labeled Fluxus "the most radical and experimental art movement of the sixties."[1] In those days, few believed him. Three decades later, more people might feel this to be so, but few could say why. We might answer that question first by noting that experimentation is ultimately marked by qualities that emerge in a laboratory, scientific or otherwise. In this essay I will examine Fluxus as an international laboratory of *ideas*—a meeting ground and workplace for artists, composers, designers, and architects, as well as economists, mathematicians, ballet dancers, chefs, and even a would-be theologian. We came from three continents—Asia, Europe, and North America. At first, many critics and artists labeled us charlatans; the general public ignored us. Later they called us artists; finally they saw us as pioneers of one kind or another. The conceptual challenge of this essay by a Fluxus insider, then, lies in trying to identify just what kind of pioneers we were.[2]

Emerging from a community that began in the 1950s,[3] Fluxus had gained its name and its identity by 1962. In different places on different continents, meetings, friendships, and relationships brought various constellations of people into contact with one another. The peripatetic George Maciunas managed to meet many of those who would cohere into Fluxus in the early 1960s. He had been trying to create an avant-garde art gallery named AG that was already nearly bankrupt on the day it opened. Next, he wanted to publish a magazine—really an encyclopedia of sorts—documenting the most advanced art, music, literature, film, and design work being done anywhere in the world. George had an ambitious plan for various interlocking editorial boards and publishing committees, but it never came to fruition. (He was better at planning than he was at fundraising or leadership.) By 1962, George was in Germany, developing a series of festivals for the public presentation of work that he planned to publish in the magazine he still had on the back burner. The magazine was to have been called *Fluxus*, so the festival was called *Fluxus*.

Nine artists and composers came together in Wiesbaden to perform: Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Addi Køpcke, George Maciunas, Nam June Paik, Benjamin Patterson, Wolf Vostell, Karl Erik Welin, and Emmett Williams. The German press liked the name of the festival and began referring to the Wiesbaden nine as *die Fluxus leute*—"the Fluxus people"—and the name stuck.[4] Other artists became associated with Fluxus through contact with members of

Opposite:
Ken Friedman, *A Flux Corsage,* 1966–76, clear plastic box with paper label on lid containing seeds. Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, George Maciunas Memorial Collection: Gift of the Friedman Family; GM.986.80.40 9 (cat. 17).

this burgeoning international avant-garde community, including such varied practitioners as Joseph Beuys, Henning Christiansen, Robert Filliou, Bengt af Klintberg, Willem de Ridder, and Ben Vautier. Others joined later, including Jeff Berner, Geoffrey Hendricks, Milan Knížák, and me.[5]

It is important to note that Fluxus was a *community* rather than a collective with a common artistic and political program.[6] (None of the artists signed the supposed Fluxus manifestoes that George Maciunas created—not even George himself.) Several streams of thought meet in the work and practices of the Fluxus community. One stream is the well-known Fluxus relationship to the teaching of John Cage, and to related lines of practice reaching back to Zen Buddhism.[7] Another stream is the more oblique but still strong relationship to earlier-twentieth-century avant-garde manifestations ranging from *LEF* and constructivism to Dada (though Fluxus people were *not* linked to the anarchistic and destructive ethos of Dada).

Perhaps the best short definition of Fluxus is an elegant little manifesto that Dick Higgins published in 1966 as a rubber stamp:

> 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.[8]

These words summarize the time-bound, transformational, and interactive development of Fluxus. In the late 1970s, I suggested using content analysis of Fluxus projects to give an overview of Fluxus, and in 1981, Peter Frank and I used this method to chart the participants for a history of Fluxus.[9] In 1991, James Lewes brought our chart forward in time by surveying twenty-one Fluxus exhibitions, catalogues, and books. The resulting chart offers an overview of the "who was who (and where)" of Fluxus over a thirty-year period.[10]

The study suggested a consensus of opinion about the allegiance of those whose names appeared in more than half of the compilations as a key participant in Fluxus. There were thirty-three artists on this list: Eric Andersen, Ay-O, Joseph Beuys, George Brecht, Philip Corner, Jean Dupuy, Robert Filliou, Albert Fine, Ken Friedman, Al Hansen, Geoffrey Hendricks, Dick Higgins, Joe Jones, Milan Knížák, Alison Knowles, Addi Køpcke, Takehisa Kosugi, Shigeko Kubota, George Maciunas, Larry Miller, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Benjamin Patterson, Takako Saito, Tomas Schmit, Mieko Shiomi, Daniel Spoerri, Ben Vautier, Wolf Vostell, Yoshimasa Wada, Robert Watts, Emmett Williams, and La Monte Young. These thirty-three individuals are included in the majority of projects and exhibitions, but a broad vision of the Fluxus community would include many more, among others Don Boyd, Giuseppe Chiari, Esther Ferrer, Juan Hidalgo, Davi det Hompson, Alice Hutchins, Bengt af Klintberg, Carla Liss, Jackson Mac Low, Walter Marchetti, Richard Maxfield, Jonas Mekas, Carolee Schneemann, Greg Sharits, and Paul Sharits.

In 1982, Dick Higgins wrote an essay in which he attempted to identify nine criteria that distinguished, or indicated the qualities of, Fluxus: internationalism, experimentalism and iconoclasm, intermedia, minimalism or concentration, an attempted resolution of the art/life dichotomy, implicativeness, play or gags, ephemerality, and specificity. Later on I worked with Dick's list, expanding it to twelve criteria: globalism, the unity of art and life, intermedia, experimentalism, chance, playfulness, simplicity, implicativeness, exemplativism, specificity, presence in time, and musicality.[11] While Fluxus had neither an explicit research program nor a common conceptual program, a range of reasonable issues could be labeled ideas, points of commonality, or conceptual criteria.[12] If they do

not constitute the framework of an experimental research program, they do make a useful framework for a laboratory of ideas.

In some respects, the Fluxus community functioned as an invisible college, not unlike the community that would give rise to early modern science.[13] The first invisible colleges involved "groups of elite, mutually interacting, and productive scientists from geographically distant affiliates who exchange[d] information to monitor progress in their field[s]."[14] In a different way, Fluxus fulfilled many of the same functions, and several Fluxus people identified their work—and Fluxus—as a form of research.[15]

Despite the parallels, though, there are also major differences, particularly in the respective attitudes of the two groups toward experiment, and in the debate surrounding what each group learned from or developed through experimental work. The natural philosophers whose efforts gave rise to modern science developed an agreed-upon language and method of formal experiment, while the artists and composers in Fluxus experimented informally and hardly agreed on anything. Formal experiment often seeks to answer clearly identified questions; artistic experiment usually seeks informal, playful results that are cast as emergent discoveries only in retrospect. Finally, beginning with the earliest journals—the *Journal des Scavans* (1665–1792) and *Philosophical Transactions* (1665–present)—natural philosophers and scientists used articles, monographs, and other media, along with public debates and programs of experiments, as platforms for exchanging ideas and debating results, producing in the process a robust, progressive dialogue. Fluxus never developed such robust mechanisms.[16]

What does make the comparison with the invisible college appropriate is that hardly anyone in Fluxus was part of a formal institution. What we shared were common interests and reasonably regular meetings, both personal and virtual. Members of the Fluxus community created a rich informal information system of newsletters, multiples, publications, and personal correspondence that enabled continual communication among colleagues who might not meet in person for years at a time. There were only one or two large-scale events that gathered the entire community in one place.[17] Nevertheless, subsets and constellations among Fluxus participants have been meeting in a rich cycle of concerts and festivals that began in 1962 and have continued sporadically for much of the half century since then. All of this created a community that fits the description of an invisible college in many respects.

The idea of Fluxus as a laboratory, on the other hand, goes back to American pragmatism and its predecessors, Unitarianism and American transcendentalism, as well as to the Shakers.[18] The Unitarians descended from the Congregational churches of New England. These were Puritan Calvinist churches, but Puritanism took a radical turn in the theology of William Ellery Channing. In the early 1800s, Channing turned away from the doctrine of sin and punishment, as well as the doctrine of the Trinity, to establish what became Unitarian Christianity.[19] Channing influenced Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and the other transcendentalists, several of whom sought ways to build a world of action in daily life through communities that embraced new concepts of work.[20] Among European thinkers of interest to the transcendentalists were Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose term "intermedia" would reappear in Fluxus (though with a different meaning), and Friedrich Schleiermacher, whose work on Biblical criticism and hermeneutics (the art of interpretation) paved the way for a new concept of interpretation theory.

Emerson foreshadowed both Cage and Fluxus by introducing the concept of the ordinary into American philosophy and art. He was one of the first Americans to write about Asian religion and philosophy as well—another link to Cage and to Fluxus artists, many of whom shared an interest in Asian philosophy, especially Zen Buddhism. In contrast to the European concept

of the sublime, which was a distinctly different view of culture, Emerson emphasized the present moment and the commonplace. In his essay titled "Experience," Emerson writes, "I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic . . . I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into today, and you may have the antique and future worlds." His embrace of the quotidian even turns rhetorical: "What would we really know the meaning of? The meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye; the form and gait of the body."[21] Like Emerson and his close friend Henry David Thoreau, Fluxus artist Dick Higgins would also celebrate the near, the down-to-earth, the familiar, in his "Something Else Manifesto" and "A Child's History of Fluxus."[22]

Transcendentalism's emphasis on experience as the basis for philosophy evolved into pragmatism toward the end of the 1800s in New England. John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, and Charles Sanders Peirce were born in New England, and William James spent much of his life there. Related to the Puritan Calvinist tradition through Congregationalism and transcendentalism,[23] these men ultimately developed a concrete philosophy for the New World. Mead's contribution to social thought through symbolic interactionism provides a rich framework for understanding Fluxus. The idea behind what George Maciunas labeled "functionalist" art was not functionalism as we understand it today but a complex paradigm of symbolic functions.[24]

The transcendentalist concern for the significance of everyday life manifested itself in the form of utopian communities such as Brook Farm, but this was not the first such effort, nor would it be the last. The so-called "Eightfold Path" of Buddhism—right view, right intention, right speech, right discipline, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration—embodies similar concepts of common work.[25] George Maciunas's great, unrealized vision of Fluxus was to establish such a community, an idea he pursued in the Fluxhouses and several other ventures. Maciunas was never able to realize this fully, but his ideas did give rise to a number of workable projects.[26]

George's last attempt at building a utopian community took place in New Marlborough, Massachusetts, where he moved in order to be close to Jean Brown's Fluxus collection and archive in an old Shaker seed house in Tyringham, Massachusetts.[27] This part of the United States had a tradition of utopian communities, from the revolutionary period, to the American renaissance sparked by Emerson, Thoreau, and the transcendentalists, to Shaker settlements. Things had not changed all that much when Jean set up shop a little ways down the road from a half a dozen communes.[28]

The Shakers were among the first productive utopians of the modern era. They were a religious community, to be sure, but their religion was one of service. They established some of the first mass production industries in the world, selling objects and artifacts through catalogues. Their furniture, superb in design and perfect in balance, was the first example of industrial design and ergonomic sensibility in the furniture trade. And they supplied America's farms and gardens with top quality seed.

A seed house was a building where seeds were sorted and packaged. The packages could be ordered individually by catalogue or mail order, in much the same way Maciunas would market Flux-products. There were also seed kits with an assortment of packages in tidy boxes that were not too different in shape or size from the suitcase-sized Fluxkits of the 1960s. Like the Fluxkits, only a few remain. In an interesting coincidence, the most complete extant seed kit is to be found at Enfield Shaker Village,[29] close to Hanover, New Hampshire, where the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College houses a Fluxus collection established in honor of George Maciunas.

Like George, the Shakers were abstemious and celibate, and there were other delightful

similarities as well. The Shaker union of work and life included art and music as more than mere pastimes. A sense of industry and a light spirit were central characteristics of the Shaker community, qualities that also typified the Fluxus community at its best. The Shakers organized their communal life around two functions, work and worship, and the productive Shaker economy was a distinctive attribute of their villages.[30] Reading the rules of the order, it is nearly impossible to separate work from other aspects of Shaker life, with rising and returning to bed, meals, and even household management structured around the tempo and meaning of the working life.[31]

When I first met Dick Higgins in 1966, I caught from his ideas a vision of work as part of exactly that kind of community life. Dick's "Something Else Manifesto" called for artists to "chase down an art that clucks and fills our guts."[32] This was a call to collaboration and a call to productive work, to art as a kind of production that engages the concept of community. Dick would introduce me to George Maciunas, whose philosophy of Fluxus articulated many of the same principles. George's vision of Fluxus called for artists who were willing to create work together, sharing ideas and principles, supporting one another. While George's vision of Fluxus was intensely political at one point in his life, by the time I met him he had shifted from a strictly hierarchical concept of the collective to a vision that was much more open.

How did Fluxus so readily become this collaborative working community or laboratory of ideas and practices? For one thing, most of the Fluxus artists were already collaborating in one way or another; Fluxus simply became a new point of intersection for us.[33] Some of the artists already knew one another, and others had worked together for many years, such as those in the New York Audio-Visual Group and John Cage's former students. They did not come to Fluxus, Fluxus came to them when George Maciunas created the name for a magazine that would publish their work. This was a building already under construction when Maciunas came along and named it Fluxus.

For another thing, despite the broad range of interests and wide geographical spread, Fluxus was not that large a community—in the 1960s, it involved fewer than a hundred people in a world population of about three billion, part of a slightly larger community of several hundred people who were active in a relatively small sector of the art world that we might label the avant-garde. Those who knew each other brought other interesting people into the group, where they became interested in the same kinds of issues and undertook the same kind of work.

History is always contingent, and there are countless scenarios in which certain people might never have met, or might have met without forming a community, or formed a very different kind of community. As it happened, however, the social and historical development of Fluxus generated intense correspondence among artists even at a distance, countless common projects, and many different kinds of collaboration. Fluxus artists met together sporadically but relatively often, and some have worked together closely for five decades now.

The concept of experiment makes claims on both thought and action. In a community such as Fluxus, these claims lead in different and occasionally contradictory directions. Such a diverse community of experimental artists, composers, and designers, who lacked a coherent research program while working with a multiplicity of approaches, runs the risk of being seen as an artist group or even a movement with some kind of continuing connection. This is especially the case because some of the participants managed to earn a living making art and most were happy, or at least willing, to exhibit their products in art museums and sell it in art galleries. While Fluxus was aggressively interdisciplinary, involving art, architecture, design, and music (among other things), it was never the kind of late modernist art movement to which it has often been reduced.

The Dartmouth College motto is apposite

here: *Vox Clamantis in Deserto*, taken from the first words of Isaiah 40:3: "A voice cries, 'In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord. Make a straight highway for our God across the wastelands.'" In this passage, the mountains are to be made flat, the rough ground level, and the rugged places a fertile plain. For George Maciunas, the way forward involved leveling and bringing an end to the art world. He felt that art was a distraction that prevented people from building a better world, while reinforcing the concepts and privileges of the upper class. George's vision of a productive world entailed erasing art, but it was a vision that tended to confuse art and the economic and social forces that surrounded it. Many Fluxus artists disagreed with his view, and even George was inconsistent—his taste in music, for example, embraced both Monteverdi and Spike Jones.

Of course, many love the mountains and the rough ground as much as the highways and the plains. The dialectical demands of Fluxus also included George Brecht's proposal to think something else, Milan Knížák's call to live differently, Robert Filliou's vision of an art whose purpose is to make life more interesting than art, and Dick Higgins's metaphor of an art that clucks and fills our guts. Such an approach to art and life—to art *within* life—entails an experimental approach that connects in significant if sometimes amorphous ways with being-in-the-world, and that generates multiple activities of different kinds.[34]

The differences within Fluxus have made it difficult to frame us all as "Fluxus people." Art has been a default frame, one that is only occasionally appropriate. Compressing the larger laboratory into that frame means that a great deal about Fluxus has been missed. What Fluxus was and perhaps remains is the most productive laboratory of ideas in the history of art, an invisible college whose field of study encompasses the essential questions of life.

Notes

1 Harry Ruhé, *Fluxus: The Most Radical and Experimental Art Movement of the Sixties* (Amsterdam: A., 1979).

2 In the space available here, it will be impossible to provide a full account of Fluxus as a laboratory of ideas and an experimental network. This is instead an "essay" in the classical senses of the word, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "Action or process of trying or testing," and "A composition of moderate length on . . . [a subject] more or less elaborate in style, though limited in range."

3 Several excellent accounts examine the years before Fluxus emerged, including Al Hansen, *Happenings: A Primer of Time-Space Art* (New York: Something Else Press, 1965); Dick Higgins, *Jefferson's Birthday/ Post Face* (New York: Something Else Press, 1964); Higgins, "In einem Minnensuchboot um die Welt," in *1962 Wiesbaden FLUXUS 1982* (Wiesbaden and Berlin: Harlekin Art and Berliner Kunstlerprogramm des DAAD, 1982), 126–35 (in parallel German and English); Jerry Hopkins, *Yoko Ono* (New York: Macmillan), esp. 20–30; Jackson Mac Low, "Wie George Maciunas die New Yorker Avantgarde kennelernte," in *1962 Wiesbaden FLUXUS 1982*, 11–125 (in parallel German and English); Owen Smith, "Proto-Fluxus in the United States: The Establishment of a Like-Minded Community of Artists," in *Fluxus: A Conceptual Country*, ed. Estera Milman, a special issue of *Visible Language*, vol. 26, nos. 1–2 (Providence: Rhode Island School of Design, 1992), 45–57; and Owen Smith, *Fluxus: The*

History of an Attitude (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 1998), 13–68.

4 For a comprehensive history of Fluxus, see Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude*. For discussions of early Fluxus, see also Owen Smith, "Developing a Fluxable Forum: Early Performance and Publishing," in *The Fluxus Reader*, ed. Ken Friedman (London: Academy Press, John Wiley and Sons, 1998), 3–21, and Hannah Higgins, "Fluxus Fortuna," in *The Fluxus Reader,* 31–59. *The Fluxus Reader* also contains an extensive chronology.

5 The loose but purposeful evolution of Robert Filliou into Fluxus is relatively typical; see Patrick Martin, "Unfinished Filliou: On the Fluxus Ethos and the Origins of Relational Aesthetics," *Art Journal* 69, nos. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 2010): 44–62. Bengt af Klintberg is another good story; see Ken Friedman, "The Case for Bengt af Klintberg," *Performance Research* 11, no. 2 (2006): 137–44, and Bengt af Klintberg, *Svensk Fluxus* (*Swedish Fluxus*) (Stockholm: Rönnells Antikvariat, 2006). Dick Higgins described the Fluxus expansion process as a series of waves; see Higgins, *Modernism since Postmodernism: Essays on Intermedia* (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 1997), 163.

6 For an explicit discussion of this issue by Fluxus co-founder Dick Higgins, see Higgins, *Modernism since Postmodernism,* 161–63 and 173–82. Correspondence between the artists and George Maciunas, as well as correspondence among the artists themselves, contains explicit refusals to sign any proposed manifesto as well as opposition to the very notion of a common ideology. (There are many examples in the Archiv Sohm in Staatsgalerie Stuttgart and the Jean Brown Archive at the Getty Research Institute.) A recent conference titled *Alternative Practices in Design: The Collective: Past, Present, and Future* at RMIT University in Melbourne explored the multiple dimensions of the idea of the collective. In the 1960s, the word was closely linked to the Soviet notion of collective farms and forced industrial collectives, which probably influenced George Maciunas's view at some point; certainly governance by an unelected commissar was one reason that most Fluxus artists shied away from the idea. After the Melbourne conference, however, my own view on all of this changed, and I have come to feel that more recent models of collective community and action might usefully describe the Fluxus phenomenon.

7 See Ellsworth Snyder, "John Cage Discusses Fluxus," in *Fluxus: A Conceptual Country,* 59–68. For an enlightening examination of Fluxus and Zen, see David T. Doris, "Zen Vaudeville: A Medi(t)ation in the Margins of Fluxus," in *The Fluxus Reader,* 237–53.

8 Higgins, *Modernism since Postmodernism,* 160.

9 Ken Friedman and Peter Frank, "Fluxus," in *Art Vivant: Special Report—Fluxus* 11 (Tokyo: New Art Seibu Company, Ltd., 1983), and Ken Friedman with Peter Frank, "Fluxus: A Post-Definitive History: Art Where Response Is the Heart of the Matter," *High Performance* 27 (1984): 56–61, 83.

10 Ken Friedman with James Lewes, "Fluxus: Global Community, Human Dimensions," in *Fluxus: A Conceptual Country,* 154–79. The completed chart offers a broad consensus of opinion by thirty experts who have given lengthy consideration to Fluxus, including scholars, critics, curators, gallerists, art dealers, Fluxus artists, and other artists interested in Fluxus. Altogether, the chart includes 351 artists presented in twenty-one different projects representing a wide variety of venues, presentations, and publications during the thirty years of Fluxus up to 1992.

11 Dick Higgins, "Fluxus: Theory and Reception," *Lund Art Press,* Fluxus Research issue, vol. 2, no. 2 (1991): 33. Dick's first version of the nine criteria appeared in a privately published 1982 paper titled "Fluxus Theory and Reception," which was reprinted in 1998 in *The Fluxus Reader,* 217–36. Dick expanded his list to eleven in Higgins, *Modernism since Postmodernism,* 174–75. For my amended list, see Ken Friedman, *Fluxus and Company* (New York: Emily Harvey Gallery, 1989), 4, reprinted in Achille Bonito Oliva, Gino Di Maggio, and Gianni Sassi, eds., *Ubi Fluxus, ibi motus 1990–1962* (Venice and Milan: La Biennale di Venezia and Mazzotta Editore, 1990), 328–32. A later version of *Fluxus and Company* appeared in *The Fluxus Reader* as well, 237–53.

12 Dick and I discussed these ideas extensively over the years, and at different times Dick labeled them criteria or points. In *Modernism since Postmodernism*, he used the term "points" but added, "really, they are *almost* criteria" (175).

13 For more on the concept of the invisible college, see Diana Crane, *Invisible Colleges: Diffusion of Knowledge in Scientific Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972); Derek de Solla Price, *Little Science, Big Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); de Solla Price, *Little Science, Big Science . . . and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); and Alesia Zuccala, "Modeling the Invisible College," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 57, no. 2 (2006): 152–68.

14 Zuccala, "Modeling the Invisible College," 152.

15 See Robert Filliou, *Research at the Stedelijk* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1971), and Ken Friedman, *The Aesthetics* (Regina: University of Saskatchewan, 1972; reprinted Devon, England: Beau Geste Press, 1973).

16 George Maciunas's publishing program developed a systematic series of test cases and projects in the form of Fluxboxes and Fluxkits, but there were long periods when almost no one in Fluxus worked or even talked with George. While Dick Higgins's Something Else Press offers a metaphorical parallel, many Fluxus people complained about Dick's essays and critical writings, disputing the value or even the possibility of a progressive research program (some still complain about my writing and editing, for similar reasons). Deep inquiry leads to a rich hermeneutics of understanding, and genuine experimentation requires deep, sustained inquiry. There is a literature of Fluxus that begins with writings by Fluxus people and continues with ongoing live conversations over the past five decades. I like to imagine this as a symposium where one is as likely to meet Diogenes or Nietzsche as Socrates and Aristotle, not to mention Kierkegaard, Mead, or Abelard. Like Diogenes and Abelard, as well, Fluxus participants are likely to be both grumpy and generous. For that matter, the history of the first invisible college demonstrates that the natural philosophers and the scientists that followed them were never entirely systematic or progressive themselves; as the coffin of a recently dead colleague was carried off to the cemetery, the great physicist Max Planck was overheard to say that science makes progress "funeral by funeral." Perhaps the same is true of Fluxus: Al Hansen's *Elegy for the Fluxus Dead* could be seen both as a celebration and as a requiem.

17 Perhaps the most notable example was the exhibition *Ubi Fluxus, ibi motus,* organized by Gino Di Maggio at the Venice Biennale in 1990.

18 It will be useful here to distinguish among three kinds of ideas, influences, and traditions. The first involves those that the artists themselves recognize. The second consists of ideas and traditions that may have influenced Fluxus people, whether or not they were aware of it. The third involves ideas or traditions that scholars may use in interpreting Fluxus and the work of Fluxus people. Fluxus people have explicitly acknowledged an interest in such things as Zen Buddhism and the ideas of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Few, however, have drawn a line back through the transcendentalists to Unitarian and Congregational theology or Puritan Calvinism. Nevertheless, if Thoreau and Emerson play a role in Fluxus thinking and art, the lines to their predecessors can also be drawn. Similarly, few Fluxus people have explicitly cited pragmatism, but the pragmatist influence seems clear, and it is certainly a responsible interpretive mechanism. In *Fluxus Experience,* published by University of California Press in 2002, Hannah Higgins worked extensively with Dewey's pragmatism; in this volume, Jacquelynn Baas draws on the perspectives of Mead.

19 For more on Channing and his theology, see Jack Mendelsohn, *Channing: The Reluctant Radical* (Boston: Little Brown, 1971); David B. Parke, ed., *The Epic of Unitarianism: Original Writings from the History of Liberal Religion* (Boston: Starr King Press, 1957). Beyond its relationship with pragmatism, Unitarian Universalism had an even more direct relationship with Fluxus in the 1960s and 1970s. I originally intended to become a Unitarian minister, and Unitarian Universalist churches and conference centers sponsored Fluxconcerts as well as Fluxus-based sermons and publications, including the *Art Folio* that I edited in 1971 for the Religious Arts Guild (Boston: Religious Arts Guild, 1971 [Religious Arts Guild "Circular/Packet: 2"]). Milan Knížák's project and Wolfgang Feelisch's contribution created something of a stir, but the overall reception of the projects—including works by Higgins, Filliou, and Brecht, along with the original *One-Inch Art Show*—was good.

20 For more on transcendentalism, see Joel Myerson, *The Transcendentalists: A Review of Research and Criticism* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1984), and Myerson, ed., *Transcendentalism: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

21 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays and Lectures* (New York: The Library of America, 1983 [1837]), 68–69. Thanks to Ditte Friedman for directing me to these passages.

22 The "Something Else Manifesto" was published in 1964 in *Manifestoes* (New York: Something Else Press), 21 (digital reprint available from UbuWeb at http://www.ubu.com/historical/gb/index.html). "A Child's History of Fluxus" was published in 1979 in Charlton Burch's *Lightworks* magazine and reprinted in Dick Higgins, *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of the Intermedia* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984).

23 That is to say, not Calvinist dogma but rather Jonathan Edwards's mystical "divine and supernatural light" imparted to the soul from God.

24 See George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, ed. and intro. Charles Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967 [1934]), and Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), esp. 1–60 on methodology and 61–77 on Mead's thought. I discovered Mead's work in 1965 and Blumer's in the early 1970s and have relied heavily on both in the decades since. The first doctoral dissertation to examine Fluxus was by anthropologist Marilyn Ekdahl Ravicz, who developed her perspective based on Dewey's pragmatism. Titled "Aesthetic Anthropology: Theory and Analysis of Pop and Conceptual Art in America," she completed it in 1974 for the Department of Anthropology of the University of California at Los Angeles.

25 One of the genuine puzzles I contend with in considering Fluxus and other art (or "anart") communities that acknowledge Buddhism as a source has been the general lack of interest in ethics. It is difficult to conceive of Buddhism, either Zen or the other schools, without the foundational ethics of the Eightfold Path.

26 For an excellent discussion of George Maciunas's experiment in urban development and the Fluxhouses, see Charles R. Simpson, "The Achievement of Territorial Community," in *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 153–88. In 2008, Stendhal Gallery in New York organized an exhibition titled *George Maciunas: Prefabricated Building System* that examined Maciunas's architectural ideas. The Simpson chapter is available on the gallery's website, along with excellent essays by Julia Robinson, Carolina Carrasco, Mari Dumett, and others. The gallery URL is http://stendhalgallery.com, and the essays are available at http://stendhalgallery.com/?page_id=852 (accessed August 19, 2010).

27 A sensitive portrait of George's last community appears in a book by his widow: Billie Maciunas, *The Eve of Fluxus: A Fluxmemoir*, with a preface by Kristine Stiles, an introduction by Geoffrey Hendricks, and an afterword by Larry Miller (Orlando, Florida: Arbiter Press, 2010). The Jean Brown Archive is now part of the Getty Center for the Arts and Humanities in Los Angeles, California. Its URL is http://www.getty.edu/research/. The online catalogue and findings aids describe the collection.

28 I spent the summer of 1972 in Tyringham working with Jean Brown and helped arrange the first meeting between Jean and George Maciunas. I knew they would hit it off but never imagined how rich their relationship would become. It delighted me that Jean's archive was located in an old Shaker seed house in the Berkshires of Massachusetts. Every evening when we ate dinner together, Jean would quote the old Shaker proverb, "Hands to work and hearts to God." It is fitting that America's first great Fluxus collection was established in a Shaker seed house, while George's last Fluxus cooperative housing project was based nearby in the wooded heartland of transcendentalism.

29 Information on the Enfield Shaker Museum is available at http://www.shakermuseum.org/index.html.

30 See Edward Deming Andrews, *The People Called Shakers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 94–135.

31 Ibid., 253–89.

32 Dick Higgins, "A Something Else Manifesto," in *Manifestoes*, 21. Digital reprint available from UbuWeb at http://www.ubu.com/historical/gb/index.html.

33 This includes even people like me, who were not artists before we became involved with the artists and composers in Fluxus. For the story of how a would-be minister became an artist—or, in Marcel Duchamp's terms, an

"anartist"—see Ken Friedman, "Events and the Exquisite Corpse," in *The Exquisite Corpse: Chance and Collaboration in Surrealism's Parlor Game*, ed. Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren, Davis Schneiderman, and Tom Denlinger (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 73–74, fn. 6, as well as Peter Frank, "Ken Friedman: A Life in Fluxus," in *Artistic Bedfellows: Histories, Theories and Conversations in Collaborative Art Practices*, ed. Holly Crawford (Lanham: University Press of America, 2008), 145–86.

34 Curatorial analysis in general has tended to dismiss Fluxus's engagement with the larger world by portraying its experiments and failures as ineffective. For example, in Thomas Kellein's 2007 book *George Maciunas and the Dream of Fluxus* (London: Thames and Hudson), George is depicted as a brilliant but failed dreamer. It is certainly true that we often influenced social change without influencing the formal qualities or conceptual focus of the trends and issues that we helped to create. Fluxus West, for example, was one of the six or seven founding publishers of the Underground Press Syndicate in 1967, but we never gained any traction on the way the papers were designed or what they dealt with. Even though we can be found in the first lists of founding papers, along with the *East Village Other*, the *Berkeley Barb*, and the *Los Angeles Free Press*, we vanish from history soon after because our focus was so vastly different. Did we exert a role in developing the concept of an alternate press? Yes. Did we have any real part in the way the press developed? Perhaps we did, at least in a small way. Did we succeed in directing serious attention to cultural issues beyond the standard underground press focal points of rock music, drugs, sex, and new left politics? Not hardly.