

The

FLUXUS

Reader

EDITED BY KEN FRIEDMAN

AE ACADEMY EDITIONS

THE FLUXUS READER

Edited by KEN FRIEDMAN

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

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

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

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

Professor Johan Olaisen, my department head, has encouraged me to deepen my thinking on the arts as a supplement to scholarship in management and informatics. Professor Fred Selnes, my recent dean, encouraged me with solid collegial support that made it a joy to work with him. Professor Pierre Guillet de Monthoux of the University of Stockholm School of Management invited me to join the European Center for Art and Management at a time when I was ready to stop my research in the arts. Instead of leaving the field, he urged me to consider how Fluxus ideas might apply to management theory. My work on this book is a step in that direction. The freedom to explore problematic concepts is at the heart of the academic enterprise. It is interesting to note that the world of management and industry is often more open to revolutionary thinking than the world of art and culture. This idea, in fact, was at the heart of George Maciunas' view of Fluxus. The bridge between art and the world of social and political production is a central issue in the work of two people who have been vital to my thinking on art, Christo and Jeanne-Claude. My esteem and affection for them cannot be measured.

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 IV
THREE FLUXUS VOICES

LARRY MILLER:
TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEOTAPED *INTERVIEW*
WITH GEORGE MACIUNAS, 24 MARCH 1978

Larry Miller: The main thing I wanted to talk about was the chart. I've sort of jotted down some specific things that I wanted to ask you about it, some specific questions about the chart.

George Maciunas: Maybe I ought to describe the general construction.

LM: Okay.

GM: So, you see, this chart is just a continuation of other charts I've done in the past for other histories and basically the chart is – shows the vertical – er, the horizontal grid, okay. In the vertical line is shown the years, and the horizontal layout shows the style. So you can point on the chart any activity, pinpoint it exactly with this grid of time and style. Now it could also be time and occasion; for instance, I've done charts which show, vertically is shown time and horizontally geographical location. This way you could say any activity in the past, you could locate exactly on the chart where it happened and when. Now for this chart I chose style rather than location because the style is so unlocalised and mainly because of the travels of John Cage. So you could call the whole chart like 'Travels of John Cage' like you could say 'Travels of St. Paul', you know? Wherever John Cage went he left a little John Cage group; which some admit, some not admit his influence. But the fact is there, that those groups formed after his visits. It shows up very clearly on the chart.

LM: Starting about when?

GM: Oh, starts from 1948. In France he visited in 1946 to 1948 and met Boulez, Shaeffer, and, sure enough, in 1948 Shaeffer starts an electronic/music-concrete studio, without giving any credit to John Cage, of course. Then he goes to Italy, then he goes to Darmstadt, then to Cologne, everywhere he goes they start a little group or studio, usually all electronic music. But at that time his influence was mainly that of *musique-concrète*. In other words, using various fragments of everyday sounds for making new music. Because his first music concrete piece is 1939.

LM: Cage?

GM: Cage, that's right. So when the French come out in 1948 and they say they invented *musique-concrète* that's just a lot of bullshit.

LM: Can I comment about that – remind you of something? Remember when I went to ask Cage about his editions?

GM: Yes.

- LM:** He said that they were particularly attached to that phrase, that term *musique-concrète* and that he didn't mind that.
- GM:** Well, he's just being very tolerant. He's very tolerant even of people that just copy him directly, like plagiarise, and don't give any credit to him. He's that kind of person, he's just super tolerant. The fact is that, you know, everybody right and left is stealing from him. Now, but that doesn't mean that he [did not get] influences in return from others. The chart, therefore, starts with what influenced Cage. Cage is definitely the central figure in the chart.
- LM:** Yeah?
- GM:** You could call that chart the Cage Chart. Not Fluxus Chart, but Cage.
- LM:** Okay, maybe we can proceed if you ...
- GM:** So you start first with areas, the movements that influenced him and that's very clearly also outlined here. We have the idea of indeterminacy and simultaneity and concretism and noise coming from Futurism, theatre, like [the] Futurist music of Russolo. Then we have the idea of the ready-made and concept art coming from Marcel Duchamp. Okay, we have the idea of collage and concretism coming from Dadaists. Now, you see they're all shown on the chart how they all end up with John Cage with his prepared piano, which is really a collage of sounds.
- LM:** Nineteen thirty-eight?
- GM:** Nineteen thirty-eight, yeah. And his *musique-concrète*, which is 1939. Then all his travels are shown. Meanwhile, there's a parallel interest in this chart, and that is of all what I would call happenings or Actions, to which two people contributed: John Cage again in 1952, his first happening and the same year Georges Mathieu also did the first Happening, called *Battle of Boudine*. And [an] interesting sideline is that Mathieu did go to Japan and did this action and started off the Gutai Group. Georges Mathieu was instrumental in starting the Gutai Group.
- LM:** His work I don't know as well as others. Just describe something that ...
- GM:** He made an Action of painting, like [a] Happening.
- LM:** Not like Pollock.
- GM:** No, no ... It was a theatrical piece, more like Yves Klein.
- LM:** Like Klein's blue nudes? Was the Gutai Group the group that shot bullets at the paintings ...
- GM:** Yeah.
- LM:** And exploded ...
- GM:** Anyway, that's something that Mathieu would do. So Gutai was very close to Georges Mathieu in the sense that they were doing paintings as Actions, much more than Pollock. And you know, different from Yves Klein. The chart doesn't show [the] contribution of Yves Klein, and that's where he should still be added on, that's where the chart is incomplete. Yves Klein has to be given more prominence in [the] 1960s, which he is not. The other important figure is Joseph Cornell, starting in 1932. Now his influence sort of is connected to Surrealists and it shows how his influence affects a lot George Brecht and Bob Watts, especially George Brecht. Now with those basic influences – of the action painting of Mathieu and first happenings of John Cage and generally all John Cage, everything that he did in the '50s, plus Joseph

Cornell, plus there's a little influence here shown of Ann Halprin called *Natural Activities and Tasks*.

LM: What would that be?

GM: That's in California. It had a lot of influence on people like James Waring and Bob Morris and Simone Forti and La Monte Young and Walter De Maria.

LM: This would be purely dance?

GM: No, no. It's just what it says: natural actions and tasks.

LM: In other words the application ...

GM: ... sprang from dance tradition but you couldn't call that a dance. They were like very natural acts you know, like walking.

LM: I see. Physical things that are outside of what you normally would consider dance, just physical activities.

GM: Yeah, like walking in a circle.

LM: Like a readymade gesture.

GM: Yeah, right. So you can give La Monte Young with all of his short compositions of 1960 some credit of that to Ann Halprin's natural activities. Let's say his audience sitting on the stage doing nothing. Okay? That's a natural activity, it's not a dance. Now we come to the middle of the chart. No, not the middle, to the first quarter. Like 1959 it becomes suddenly very active. Maybe because John Cage opened up a school and has all those people coming to his school. Also, the so-called *nouveaux realistes* in France become very active, plus Ben Vautier becomes very active. So 1959 is a very influential year. We have Nam June Paik playing [his] first piece, Vostell doing [his] first piece, Allan Kaprow doing [his] first Happenings, Dick Higgins and Yves Klein. Well, he was already before that, but he culminated, let's say, by then. Ben Vautier doing his first piece by signing ... everything: continents, peace, famine, war, noise, end of the world and especially human sculptures. That's something important to know because later Manzoni copied it. Gestures ... he had first gestures appearing then in 1959 and not in 1968 with Acconci and people like that. And we have first postage stamps of Bob Watts, a lot of card music that is written on cards like of George Brecht and first-concept art of Henry Flynt. Then that goes on to 1960. And Fluxus comes in '61. Actually, you could say officially early in '62. Because in '61 I had a gallery which did everything that later Fluxus did but did not use that name.

LM: That's the AG Gallery?

GM: Right. And La Monte Young had a series of the same kind of things, same kind of Events, at Yoko Ono's studio on Chambers Street, so that chart points out, gives the whole programme, you know, what was performed.

LM: Yoko's loft ... what's the date there? Was that before the Wiesbaden?

GM: Oh, definitely. That's in 1960, 1961.

LM: Oh, so it's the year before.

GM: It's '61, just like the AG Gallery was '61.

LM: That was the fall of '61, was it, the AG Gallery?

GM: Winter of '61.

LM: What were you doing up until the time you started the AG Gallery? That's the first time you appear[ed] there.

- GM:** The reason I got in touch with all those people was that I went to Richard Maxfield's class. See, after John Cage . . . John Cage gave [a] one-year class in New School. The second year Richard Maxfield gave a class in electronic music and I met La Monte Young there who was taking the same class, you know. So I was interested in what La Monte was doing. He introduced [me to] other people, and that's how we put together this whole programme at the AG Gallery and meanwhile he had put up the programme at Yoko's gallery . . . loft. So we have AG and Yoko's loft more or less simultaneously. They were slightly different but not much, like we both featured Jackson Mac Low, we both featured Bob Morris and La Monte Young. But we wouldn't show the same compositions, you know, that we would . . . At the AG we had two La Monte Young's compositions, Nos 3 and 7, and at Yoko's loft it was all [the] 1961 compositions – you know: 'Draw a straight line.' And Henry Flynt gave a concert at Yoko's loft but a lecture in [the] AG Gallery. So they were a little different there.
- LM:** These were going on concurrently, these . . .
- GM:** Right.
- LM:** This was when you first met Yoko?
- GM:** Yeah, and everybody else. Well, Dick Higgins – Richard Maxfield, of course, I'd met before, in the school.
- LM:** Yeah. Can I back up there just a minute? Were you in any of the John Cage classes at the New School?
- GM:** No.
- LM:** But the Richard Maxfield classes you were. And that's where you first really made all the connections.
- GM:** Right. See, my first interest was electronic music.
- LM:** Were you composing then?
- GM:** Yeah, I was doing some composing.
- LM:** Do those exist now?
- GM:** No, they don't.
- LM:** Why not?
- GM:** I don't know what happened to them.
- LM:** Oh!
- GM:** Then in 1962, I went to Europe and the plan was to continue . . . Oh, before I went to Europe we published or at least we put together La Monte Young's *Anthology*, that book, you know, the red book.
- LM:** I have that here.
- GM:** Right. So. We couldn't include everything that we had collected, all the materials we had collected by then – like it didn't have Bob Watts and you know had very few things by George Brecht – and so I thought I would go ahead and make another publication with all the pieces that were not included in [the] *Anthology*. More or less newer pieces. But La Monte wasn't interested in doing a second *Anthology* book. So the initial plan was just to do another, like a second *Anthology* book, except graphically it would have been a little more, er, less conventional than the first one, which means it would have had objects and you know, a different kind of packaging. So really then the idea germinated to use the whole book as bound envelopes with objects in the envelopes. See, we had a couple

objects already in the first *Anthology*, you know, like the loose Diter Rot machine holes, things like that. A little envelope with [a] card of La Monte, another envelope with a letter in it, you know – so things like that. Cards that have to be cut up ...

LM: Now, you designed that book.

GM: Yeah, I designed that book.

LM: And it was edited by ... put together ...

GM: La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low.

LM: So then did they suggest the ... was this your first publication, the first Fluxus publication, the second one you're talking about?

GM: The second one was going to be the first Fluxus publication but it took a few years to get off the ground. Meanwhile we thought, well, we'll do concerts, that's easier than publishing and will give us propaganda like for the publication. Maybe then we'll find people who will want to buy publications – because at first we couldn't sell *Anthology* either, you know, so it was just accumulating in a warehouse. So then the idea was to do concerts as a promotional trick for selling whatever we were going to publish or produce. That's how the Wiesbaden series came by and that's the first time that it was called 'Fluxus Festivals' and that's the Fall of ...

LM: September of '62, isn't it?

GM: Right. Yeah, September of '62. And ...

LM: Was it being called Fluxus by then?

GM: Yeah. It was called a Fluxus Festival.

LM: Here's my chance then to ...

GM: There were fourteen concerts in a row.

LM: I'd like to ask about the name Fluxus, I mean, where did that come from?

GM: That came still while we were thinking in New York of what to call the new publication.

LM: When you say 'we', you mean you and La Monte.

GM: No, La Monte sort of didn't care, and then [it] was mainly me and my gallery partner, 'cause he was going to maybe call the gallery that or something. Then the gallery went bankrupt so it didn't matter; he dropped out, so he's out of the picture.

LM: He's not an artist.

GM: No. So basically it was me alone then who finally determined we were going to call that name, and [the] reason for it was the various meanings that you'd find in the dictionary for it – you know, so that it's like it has very broad, many meanings, sort of funny meanings. Nobody seemed to care anyway what we were going to call it because there was no formal meetings or groups or anything.

LM: The name was thought of at first to refer to ...

GM: Just to the publication.

LM: A publication called ...

GM: *Fluxus*, and that's it, that was going to be like a book, with a title, that's all.

LM: Did you think of then Fluxus ... You didn't think of it in the beginning the way it's sort of come to be known now, Fluxus sort of ... ?

GM: As a movement?

LM: Stand ... no?

- GM:** No. It was just the name of a book, the second anthology ... Now, then, after we started to do the concerts we started to have little shows – exhibits, too – and that's how we started to make objects, to be sort of multiples, you know, mass-produced. That was still before the yearbook came out, the first Flux yearbook. It was couple years before the yearbook came out; now, do you have the second part of the chart?
- LM:** The second part is folded over there.
- GM:** Nope, it's missing.
- LM:** This goes up to 1962 only I mean, rather ...
- GM:** Yeah, that's what I mean. It goes to 1964.
- LM:** You know, you never gave me the second part.
- GM:** All right, I'll have to do it from my memory. Now like around '64 or so we finally did a ... the second Yearbox ... yearbook ... came out – that's the bound envelopes – and [it] didn't sell at all. Maybe we sold two or one copy. They were selling then, I think, \$20 or \$30 each. Now they're selling for \$250. Heh, heh.
- LM:** This is the Yearbox.
- GM:** Yeah.
- LM:** That's the one with the little ...
- GM:** With envelopes.
- LM:** I guess I don't have that. The one I have has films and ...
- GM:** That's the second Yearbox. The first one is bound envelopes.
- LM:** Oh, Barbara has one of those at Backworks.
- GM:** Yeah.
- LM:** Is that with the metal bolts through the ...
- GM:** Right. And then the contents is like an accordion; it just keeps falling out and being in your way all the time.
- LM:** Yeah. Are there, is that edition over, are the contents all dispersed?
- GM:** No, it's still ... Now and then I still put a couple up.
- LM:** Yeah?
- GM:** [It] takes lot of time to put it together.
- LM:** What can I trade you for one of those?
- GM:** Well ...
- LM:** Carry you to Jamaica on my back? [*He laughs.*]
- GM:** Yeah. [*laughs.*] Anyway, then, why you're lucky to have the second Yearbox because that's completely out of print, because there are no more viewers available – the film viewers.
- LM:** I know you said they're nowhere in the world but I'm going to try to check into that for you.
- GM:** Well, if you find then I can put more out because I have everything else, all the other components except ...
- LM:** Yeah.
- GM:** Eight-millimetre, not Super 8, 8mm viewers, little hand-held viewers.
- LM:** So have you ...
- GM:** See the objects came out sort of together with those Yearboxes and we were not rushing. First objects were quite a few of Bob Watts and George Brecht, especially

George Brecht, came out with puzzles and games, things like that. They were, oh, I would say – let's see if it's already on this chart – 1963, his first 'Water Yam' events came out, which is now out of print.

LM: So let me see if I . . .

GM: Objects came from 1963 on.

LM: Okay, the first object then was the . . .

GM: The *Water Yam*.

LM: Now we're talking about boxes. First publication was the *Yearbox*, which followed . . .

GM: No, you could say the *Water Yam* because that's all printed.

LM: Because it came out before even though it was started later.

GM: It came out before the *Yearbox*.

LM: Because it took longer to produce. The 'Water Yam' then, was that produced by you and George Brecht?

GM: Well, by me, he just gave me the text.

LM: And then you had the cards printed?

GM: Yeah, and the boxes made and everything.

LM: Had he issued any boxes? I'm trying to get down sort of to the genesis of the idea of Fluxboxes.

GM: Well, he made up prototypes of boxes that were puzzles. See, I got hold of lots of plastic boxes from a factory and then just handed them to everybody and I said, how about doing something with them? So George Brecht was the first one to respond and he came up with lots of little boxes, with games and puzzles and things like that.

LM: What had been his format before then? Cards? Printed Events?

GM: Boxes, too. They were sort of handmade wooden boxes.

LM: On the order of Cornell, would you say . . . influenced by Cornell?

GM: Yeah, Cornell-style and sort of one of a kind definitely. But now I was saying we were going to make multiples, you know, say, like [one] hundred boxes. So here is a simple plastic box and I asked him to think up simple things to do with it. So George Brecht thought of, he was the first one to respond Ben Vautier responded with a lot, too. And Bob Watts. And, you know, by then, each year there are more and more; by now there are a hundred boxes by almost everyone.

LM: So the very first box was *Water Yam*.

GM: *Water Yam*, yeah.

LM: That was with Bob and George.

GM: That's just George Brecht.

LM: George Brecht. Well, what am I thinking of? . . . I'm thinking of Yam Festival.

GM: *Water Yam* is complete now, that's [the] complete works of George Brecht really, on cards, printed.

LM: What were some of the other early boxes then?

GM: Ball and quiz puzzles, like the ball puzzle: 'Observe the ball rolling uphill'; you know that one?

LM: Uh huh.

GM: That's one of his early ones. Or a box that contained a shell, sea shell, and the text says: 'Arrange the beads in such a way that the word "C-U-A-L" never occurs.'

LM: The word, which?

GM: C-U-A-L.

LM: C-U-A-L.

GM: Never occurs. It would not occur anyway. [*Both laugh.*] They are shells, not beads. Very mysterious puzzles. [*Both laugh.*] Bob Watts came out with rocks then, marked by weight or volume in cubic centimetres or whatever, and he came out with early food art then, like 1964. Made a fire hydrant . . . no . . . fire alarm as a cake.

LM: Didn't he make a Mona Lisa cake, too?

GM: I don't know about that but he made lots of cakes. Then Dick Higgins didn't do boxes in those days. He was very impatient about printing his complete works, which were voluminous, and I just couldn't get to it, so then he decided he would open up his own press and print it. That's how the Something Else Press came about, more or less from his impatience, you know, not wanting to wait for my slow process.

LM: How were you supporting yourself all during this time?

GM: By having a job. So all those productions were right out of my pocket. Ninety percent of my pay went to support Fluxus productions.

LM: What was your job then?

GM: Graphic design. So I worked 'till, oh, I think, 1968.

LM: Who'd you work for? I've forgotten now.

GM: Oh, a small, one-man studio.

LM: Different people?

GM: No, one place. Earned about ten thousand so I spent nine thousand on Fluxus.

LM: Do you have any idea what you totally spent?

GM: I have an idea. On Fluxus?

LM: Uh huh.

GM: Probably about fifty thousand

LM: Has it paid off?

GM: No, it'll never pay off. Look at Dick Higgins, how much he lost on his Something Else Press, like almost half a million.

LM: May I ask a stupid question? Why didn't it pay off? Because, isn't part of the idea that it's low-cost and multiple distribution . . .

GM: No one was buying it, in those days. Nobody was buying at all. We opened up a store on Canal Street in . . . what was it? . . . 1964. And we had it open I think almost all year. We didn't make one sale in that whole one year.

LM: [*Laughs.*]

GM: We did not even sell a fifty-cent item, a postage stamp sheet. And things were cheap then. You could buy V TRE papers for a quarter, you could buy George Brecht puzzles for one dollar, Yearboxes for twenty dollars.

LM: So what do they cost now?

GM: Just to give you an idea: Yearbox, a Yearbox is 250, complete set of V TREs is 350, of nine issues, and the *Water Yam*, if you can still find any around, is like around \$100. Used to be \$5.

LM: The basic thing that I wanted you to talk about was . . . concerning the chart . . . business of concretism. What do you mean by concretism and what's the history? I'll

just ask you both questions and then you can take it – the history, how you trace concretism and how that's evolved today. And secondly, what part does humour play in that and how do you trace the history of humour? Because it seems to me that your aesthetic is tied up with both of these things.

GM: Yeah, that's right. Well, concretism is a very simple term. It means the opposite of abstraction. So that's what the dictionary meaning means: opposite of abstraction.

LM: Well, this doesn't mean that a realistic painting is concrete?

GM: No, but the realistic painting is not realistic, it's illusionistic. Right?

LM: Uh huh.

GM: So it's not concrete, therefore. Concrete painting would be ... oh ... something like Ay-O's holes. You know, the holes are concrete, they're not illusion. If you painted the holes to look like holes, they would not be concrete any more, they would be illusionistic. Many people call realistic paintings by the wrong terminology. Like Rembrandt or Da Vinci. They're not realistic at all, they're illusionistic. Now the first concrete painting would be ... oh ... like Chinese abstract calligraphy. That's concrete. There's no illusion about it.

LM: Because of gesture being ...

GM: Yeah, because he writes a character. Now [its] same thing in music. You can have illusionistic music, you can have abstract music, you can have concrete music. Or you can have poetry the same way. Now in music, let's say, if you have an orchestra play, that's abstract because the sounds are all done artificially by musical instruments. But if that orchestra is trying to imitate a storm, say, like Debussy or Ravel does it, that's illusionistic now. It's still not realistic. But if you're going to use noises like the clapping of the audience or farting or whatever, now that's concrete. Or street-car sounds, you know. Or a whole bunch of dishes falling down from the shelf: that's concrete. Nothing illusionistic about it. Or abstract. So the same thing with action. You have a ballet, which is very abstract. You make completely concrete abstract gestures ... nothing to do with everyday life. So it's very stylised, very abstract. You can be illusionistic, too; in a ballet where you try to imitate something, like a swan, the movement of [a] swan; that's still not realistic. Realistic would be, let's say, if you marched in a circle, just walked in a circle, like they had a ballet like that. These two artists, they did Stravinsky's ballet in one version like that where the soldiers just marched throughout the whole piece in a circle. That I would call a concrete ballet.

LM: What were the best examples in the visual and plastic arts?

GM: For concrete?

LM: Yeah, what were the things that most influenced you, because I know, I want to try to get you [to be] a little more specific.

GM: Well, the ready-made is the most concrete thing. Cannot be more concrete than the ready-made.

LM: Because it is what it is.

GM: Right, so that's extreme concrete. There's no illusion about it, it's not abstract. Most concrete is the ready-made. Now, Duchamp thought mainly about ready-made objects. John Cage extended it to ready-made sound. George Brecht extended it furthermore ... well, together with Ben Vautier ... into ready-made actions, everyday

actions, so for instance a piece of George Brecht where he turned a light on, and off, okay? That's the piece. Turn the light on and then off. Now you do that every day, right?

LM: Uh huh.

GM: ... without even knowing you're performing George Brecht. That's a real concrete piece; you see, not when you do it like a stage piece especially, like every day. He says another one: two directions – yellow and red. All right, it could be street-lights changing from red to yellow. Anyway, I would give to George Brecht a lot of credit for extending that idea of ready-made into the realm of action.

LM: And Ben Vautier?

GM: And Ben Vautier, too.

LM: What sort of things did he do that were along these lines?

GM: Well, you see he would make a ready-made out of everything, like he says he would sign a war as his piece – that's a ready-made. The whole Second World War is a Ben Vautier piece.

LM: [*Laughs*] I cannot focus when I'm laughing.

GM: Okay.

LM: So the idea of signing ... didn't he sign the world?

GM: World God, everything, end of the world. Now he is taking the ready-made to absurdity, to the absurd end. He leaves nothing untouched; he signs everything. Therefore, everything is Ben Vautier. So there is a humour coming in already. But otherwise humour, there's a lot of humour in Futurist's Theatre, there's also humour in just straight vaudeville, like Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. There's a lot of humour in musical humour, like Spike Jones. Now they may not have a very direct influence, but they were still there, so there's still that tradition of doing funny concerts and funny music. And Bob Watts was sort of keen on humour. And Ben Vautier again, but I would say I was mostly concerned with humour, I mean like that's my main interest, is humour. And Bob Watts had a lot of it, that concern. George Brecht, I don't know ... maybe quite a lot, too. But generally most Fluxus people tended to have a concern with humour.

LM: Do you think that that's something that had been lacking in the scene in general?

GM: Right, yeah. Even in Futurist times humour was sort of very incidental. I mean, they were very darn serious with their serious manifestos. We came out with funny manifestos. I mean, they would never write funny manifestos. The results may have looked funny but like they didn't really intend it to be so funny. Like they, you know, they were more interested in shock value than the humour value. So lots of boxes we made are so very humorous, films, everything, concerts, sports events, foods ... whatever we did, like even serious things like a Mass ended up to be humorous.

LM: Yeah, I know, I was a gorilla. That was one of my first contacts with you, yeah, at Douglass.

GM: Yeah, you were a gorilla.

LM: I remember the first time I met you was when we were going to do a concert or events at Stonybrook, but it never came off.

GM: It never materialised and we collected lots of material and lots of pieces ...

LM: And the next thing I think we did ...

GM: And he just short-changed on us and we had all the programmes printed. They were printed on dice ...

LM: Actual dice?

GM: Real dice.

LM: Really? Do you have any of those?

GM: Nope. The dice manufacturer kept them because we didn't pay the whole bill.

LM: [Laughs] So now he has useless dice.

GM: Lots of useless dice and printed programmes.

LM: They would be valuable, too.

GM: Sure.

LM: He probably could sell them now and get his money back.

GM: Yeah. Except he probably erased them and used them for something else.

LM: All right. The idea I want to talk a little bit more about [is] the idea of concretism. When you are writing a piece – I'm just saying what occurs to me based on the experiences I've had with you – when you are writing a piece or you're trying to do something, the thing that's always most important to you, it seemed to me, is that the piece have something to do with the characteristics of the site or the situation that the content of the work deals with.

GM: Well, see, that's not exactly concretism. That would be called functionalism. That I would describe as follows. That's when the piece that you are doing has an inherent connection to the form, you know, so give you example. Uh, we did the whole series of aprons, Okay?

LM: Uh huh.

GM: A non-functional apron would be to print some flowers on it. Okay? Now that has nothing to do with the fact that it's an apron or the fact that you wear it on top of your body. Right?

LM: Uh huh.

GM: Let's say you print McLuhan's face on it, or whatever, or Beatles or whatever is popular, you know. It has nothing to do with the fact that it's an apron or that you are wearing on top of your stomach. Okay, now that I would call non-functionalism. I wasn't interested in that. I was interested in functionalism so therefore when I came and designed aprons I designed aprons that had something to do with the shape that was going to cover you. So, for instance one version was Venus de Milo, both sides blown up so that when you covered your, from neck to knee, you were covered with this Venus de Milo – photographic image. Okay. Or another apron was image of a stomach right on top of your stomach. So, I would call that functionalism. Now it can be applied to everything. For instance, we did a series of stationery. Remember?

LM: Uh huh.

GM: The envelopes were like gloves and the letters were like hands. Now, again, the function is now ... an envelope and a glove ... same function: the glove encloses the hand, right?

LM: Uh huh.

GM: An envelope encloses the hand. Now, a non-functional envelope would be an envelope

showing let's say lots of flowers, all right? And the letterhead may be wheat or something. So the one has no connection with the other, and the fact that why flowers have to be on an envelope, they could be on a carpet, too, you know.

LM: Uh huh.

GM: Now that's the difference. That's not concretism. That's functionalism.

LM: Do these same principles, though, apply to performance, Fluxus performance?

GM: Yeah, right. Well, not as much. You see, the reason I am so concerned with that is that that's an architect's training, I mean, that's the way [an] architect thinks – he thinks in functionalism – otherwise he's not an architect, he's a sculptor or stage designer. If he's an architect or engineer, he'll think in a functional way. Or a mathematician thinks in a functional way, also. Function is a mathematical term. Now in performance, to a certain degree, of course, if you're going to have a harpsichord and you want to do a piece, then obviously you should use the harpsichord for that piece. You don't have to play on the keyboard, you know, and play Couperin or something, but you should use some characteristic of the harpsichord: its shape, its lightness or the way the strings respond to objects being thrown into it or whatever. That would be functional way of using it. And a non-functional way, I would say, would be if you, say, stood next to the harpsichord and played a violin, you know. Now, we have done a piece like that, too, where a performer played the harmonica inside the harpsichord, but that was as a joke; in other words, you thought, he opens up the harpsichord . . .

LM: That was me that did that.

GM: Yeah. That's a good piece. You thought, you know, the audience thought, well, you're going to perform something on the strings or something inside and then you hear harmonica sound coming as a surprise, so it's sort of like a surprise piece. But definitely, see, it's more obvious to be functional, easier, let's say, to be functional in performance.

LM: Easier.

GM: Yeah, definitely, because, you know, you're given not as many limitations, you're given, in fact, help. You're getting all those instruments and you may let yourself use them. So you end up using them. You're being functional then. It's a little harder when you are trying to design objects because the tendency is to become just decorative and just apply decoration on top of things that have nothing to do with what you are doing. You know, it's like, look at the stores that sell stationeries; I mean, most of the stationeries have no function at all, no relationship to the idea of the envelope, which means enclosing something else. Now Jaime Davidovich did a functional piece. He wrinkled up a piece of paper and then painted the wrinkles of paper so that it came out like constantly wrinkled paper.

LM: Printed as wrinkles?

GM: Yeah. I would say that's more or less of a functional. He used the function of a paper, he did something that the paper, that is characteristic of the paper, you know, and didn't print, you know, something that had no connection with the paper.

LM: Well, okay, while we're on this terminology then, how does functionalism – which is sort of a favourite concern of yours because of your architecture background, how does that differ from automorphism that you have under Bob Morris?

GM: Oh, it's entirely different thing now. Automorphism means a thing making itself.

LM: Uh huh.

GM: Okay. So, now, and he was about the only one that I know that practised that form of art. And I coined that term, he, nobody, I think, has used that term, automorphism.

LM: Uh huh.

GM: By that is meant, for instance . . . I'll give you, some classic examples of this . . . he built a box which contained its own making – sound of its own making, a tape, the making of that box. And that's all it was, it was just a box with tape inside of its own making. He made a filing system, the whole like a library-card filing system.

LM: I know that piece . . . a file that refers to itself.

GM: . . . where every card described its own making: where he got the paper, where automorphism, you know, but, like, that has nothing to do with functionalism.

LM: Or concretism?

GM: Well, it's very concrete.

LM: I suppose I'd had a looser definition . . .

GM: It's a branch of concretism.

LM: That's what I thought.

GM: You see, it's a branch of concretism.

LM: I thought functionalism would be similar, too, because functionalism means that the concern of the piece, let's call it, is with the characteristics of the medium itself.

GM: Yeah, in a sense it is functional, but it doesn't have to be. It could still be automorphic.

LM: Uh huh.

GM: It's not a requirement. It's nice if it is. Uh, but it's not a prerequisite, you know, anyway, it's an entire[ly] different thing; it's like saying apple and sweet. All right, apple can be sweet but it can also be sour. Heh, heh, you know.

LM: Uh huh.

GM: And maybe it's nicer when it's sweet or the other way around, but the two are still separate things.

LM: I want to just get a few catch-all kind of questions here. I wanted to know if you made a connection between Fluxus and Dada, in that Fluxus is a name that's applied to, let's say – for lack of a better word – a certain sort of aesthetic or approach to expression, and then there were words, this idea of a word being kind of invented to represent a sensibility – Dada has that.

GM: Yeah, well . . . there's nothing wrong there.

LM: And then there's Merz . . .

GM: It became that, eventually, after a few years . . . it became I would say not a group, but more like a way of life, you know. Now Dada was definitely a tight group with a strict membership. Fluxus is not. It's more like a way of doing things, you know. Very informal, sort of like a joke group. It's like if you ask people like George Brecht, 'Are you Fluxus?', then he'll just laugh at you. It's more like Zen than Dada in that sense. If you ask a Zen monk, 'Are you Zen?' he probably won't reply by saying 'Yes, I'm Zen.' He'll give you some odd answer . . . like hit you on the head with a stick. So, it's not that rational of a group. It's not easy to describe it in just a sentence . . . its characteristics. But I think, like, you carry many things over. It has the humour; it does

have the functionalism, a lot of that; it is very concrete, I think; it has influences of, like, John Cage, tremendous influence, and Duchamp, and to a slight degree maybe Yves Klein by way of Ben Vautier. And in music, the same thing, concretism again, like humour may branch out into absurdity and things like that, or absurd theatre. Now by monomorphism – you mentioned monomorphism – that's an important item which should be mentioned. That's where it differs from Happenings. See, happenings are polymorphic, which means many things happening at the same time. That's fine, that's like baroque theatre. You know, there would be everything going on: horses jumping and fireworks and waterplay and somebody reciting poems and Louis XIV eating a dinner at the same time. So, that's polymorphism. *Poly* means many forms. Monomorphism, that means more one form. Now, reason for that is that, you see, lot of Fluxus is gaglike. That's part of the humour, it's like a gag. In fact, I wouldn't put it in any higher class than a gag, maybe a good gag.

LM: Really?

GM: Yes.

LM: You don't consider Fluxus art?

GM: A high art form? No. I think it's good, inventive gags. That's what we're doing. And there's no reason why a gag, some people, if they want to call it art, fine, you know. Like I think gags of Buster Keaton are really [a] high art form, you know, heh, heh, sight gags. We do not just sight gags: sound gags, object gags, all kinds of gags. Now, you cannot have a joke in multi-forms. In other words, you cannot have six jokers standing and telling you six jokes simultaneously. It just wouldn't work. Has to be one joke at a time.

LM: Because jokes apply to our linear expectations.

GM: Right. The whole structure's linear and you cannot have even two jokes simultaneously; you don't get it. So the whole structure of a joke is linear and monomorphic and I think that's why our concept pieces tend to be that way; it's like a gag. You cannot have three gags simultaneously either, you're just going to miss two of them. You'll get one and miss two. Watch Buster Keaton. He'll never have two gags at the same time. They follow one another very quickly, but they will not be simultaneous. And if they're simultaneous, usually they're bad gags. That's one reason I think Marx Brothers are not that good on gags because they overcrowd them. They just, you know, put many gags together and then you just miss it unless you see their film five, six times and you can sort the gags all out.

LM: Question, then. If you, okay, you consider Fluxus not really a group but a sensibility, kind of, and you don't consider it high art, you consider it gag.

GM: Low art. Yeah.

LM: Yeah. What do you consider the state of the arts at this point and what do you consider high art?

GM: Well, there's a lot, too much high art, in fact; that's why we're doing Fluxus.

LM: Compare Fluxus and ...

GM: And high art?

LM: And high art today.

GM: First of all, high art is very marketable. You can sell for half a million, you can sell for

100,000. You know, very marketable. Second, the names are big names, they're marketable names. Like, you just have to mention the name and everybody knows. Like you mention Warhol, Lichtenstein, everybody knows. Mention Ben Vautier, even George Brecht, very few people will know. And now even when they say a *Yearbox* sells for 250, there are very few collectors who will collect them, they're just special collectors of Fluxus things and they're willing to pay those prices because they're just not available any more. But museums don't buy it. Now high art is something you find in museums. Fluxus you don't find in museums. Museums just don't have it. The only exception is Beaubourg and that's only because of Pontus Hulten, and even then, he has all Fluxus things in the library, not in [the] collection of art, but in the library, he has documents. So he doesn't consider it art either; he considers it a document.

LM: But that doesn't bother you?

GM: No, in fact it pleases me.

LM: Why does it please you?

GM: Because we're never intended to be high art. We came out to be like a bunch of jokers. In fact, I gave couple times an answer to one banker asked me when we applied for a mortgage. They asked Bob Watts what was his profession, he said, well he was a professor for twenty-five years. Then they asked what do I make and what do I do, and I said, 'I make jokes!' 'Oh,' they said, 'you're not going to make a joke out of the mortgage now will you?' [*Laughs.*]

LM: Little did they know. [*Laughs.*]

GM: [*Laughs.*] Now, like our early manifestos, when they were still serious, like the first or second year, they were all anti-art sort of, and all tended to be towards sort of forms that everybody could do. You see, it's all connected with John Cage. When John Cage says that you can listen to street noise and get art experience from that, then you don't need musicians to make music. Everybody can be his own musician and listen to street noises. If you get art experience from George Brecht's piece of turning the light on and off every evening or morning, everybody is that, you see? You're leaving the whole professional artist [thing] completely. If you can get from everyday life experience, from everyday ready-mades, you can substitute art experience with that, then you completely eliminate the need of artists. All I would add is that I would say, well, even better would be to obtain an art experience from a chair by Charles Eames let's say. Then you have a good chair you can sit on, plus you have an art experience when you sit on it. You kill two birds with one stone and still have no artist needed, but you need then somebody like Charles Eames [*Laughs.*]

LM: So that's getting back to sort of like functionalism again.

GM: That you see was my ... I was pushing him.

LM: Uh huh. Okay.

GM: Bob Watts was probably the one who disagreed most with functionalism and you'll notice that there are many of his pieces that are completely non-functional.

LM: Well, some of them are.

GM: For instance, postcards.

LM: They make a joke of function sometimes.

GM: No, there's just no connection. He'll make a postcard that has nothing to do with a

postcard. Now, Ben Vautier will do a very functional postcard where he has one called 'Postman's Choice.' On one side of the postcard, he'll write one address with a stamp and on another, another address with a stamp. That's functionalism.

GM: He's using the medium for a piece. Now the postcard is used, he understands the medium and he uses the medium for his piece. It's closely connected to the way [the] piece is composed. But if you stamp your own face on the postcard, so what?