

FLUXUS FORMS

**ETS
SIX
SIX
S**

Forms

*Scores, Multiples, and
the Eternal Network*

NATILEE HARREN

The University of Chicago Press
Chicago and London

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637
The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London
© 2020 by The University of Chicago
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used
or reproduced in any manner whatsoever with-
out written permission, except in the case of brief
quotations in critical articles and reviews. For more
information, contact the University of Chicago Press,
1427 E. 60th St., Chicago, IL 60637.
Published 2020
Printed in the United States of America

29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 1 2 3 4 5

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-35492-7 (cloth)
ISBN-13: 978-0-226-35508-5 (e-book)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226355085.001.0001>

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Harren, Natilee, author.

Title: Fluxus forms : scores, multiples, and the eternal
network / Natilee Harren.

Description: Chicago : The University of Chicago Press,
2020. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019027342 | ISBN 9780226354927
(cloth) | ISBN 9780226355085 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Fluxus (Group of artists) | Art, Modern—
20th century. | Avant-garde (Music)

Classification: LCC N6494.F55 H37 2020 | DDC 709.04—
dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019027342>

This publication has been made possible through
support from the Terra Foundation for American Art
International Publication Program of CAA and the
City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance.

TERRA
FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN ART



© This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO
Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

FOR MICHAEL

The form that Fluxus was trying to promote was first of all a form of openness: openness, you might say, practically to the point of dissolution.

JOSEPH BEUYS

I don't think it would be correct to say that there are no objects or that Fluxus wanted to destroy them. The *Exercise* only shows how one can change one's attitude to the concept of the object.

GEORGE BRECHT

All form is a process of notation.

DICK HIGGINS

CONTENTS

PRELUDE	The Artwork in Flux	1
ONE	Diagramming Form, from Graphic Notation to the Fluxus Event Score	27
TWO	Of Drips, Diagrams, and Immanent Form: Fluxus in the Wake of Abstract Expressionist Painting	71
THREE	George Brecht and the Notational Object	101
FOUR	George Maciunas, Fluxboxes, and the Transitional Commodity	133
FIVE	Objects Without Object: Robert Filliou and the Unworking of Fluxus	169
CODA	The Fluxus Virtual, Actually	209

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 225

NOTES 229

INDEX 269

Plates follow page 70.

DRIP MUSIC (DRIP EVENT)

For single or multiple performance.

A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel.

Second version: Dripping.

G. Brecht
(1959-62)

Fig 1. George Brecht, *Drip Music (Drip Event)*, 1959-1962. Event score card included in *Water Yam* (1963). Jean Brown papers, 1916-1995 (bulk 1958-1985), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (890164 and 2016.M.14). © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

PRELUDE

The Artwork in Flux

Fluxus began with a drip.

Or rather, it began with several drips, as a drip seldom appears alone. A drip most often comes as part of a series of drips, drip-drip-dripping on in their incessant way.

This book begins with a work by George Brecht, *Drip Music (Drip Event)* (1959–1962), among a genre of performance instructions referred to by the artist as “event scores” (fig. 1). It seems to be a simple and direct text. The wording and layout are precise in their minimalism, the primary incident being the transmission of water from one container to another. As a model Fluxus work and, more particularly, a model Fluxus event score, *Drip Music*’s wording is precisely *imprecise*, as ambiguous as possible, a condensation of text designed to open out meaning to the widest range of interpretations. The performance of the work can be single *or* multiple; there may be multiple drips, multiple water sources, multiple

vessels, or multiple performers. In addition, the language of objects employed here—"source," "vessel"—is neutral but strikingly vague. As if Brecht's choice of language was not reduced enough, a second version written into the score pre-scribes, simply: "dripping."

Brecht's *Drip Music* became known as part of the standard repertoire in the concerts of Fluxus, the international neo-avant-garde artist collective founded by the Lithuanian-American artist and designer George Maciunas in 1962. We can trace in photographs a history of the life of *Drip Music* as it was performed throughout the first European Fluxus concert tour between September 1962 and the summer of 1963, when "chairman" Maciunas introduced the Fluxus collective's work to a broad public for the first time along with a shifting cast of co-conspirators including Robert Filliou, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Nam June Paik, Benjamin Patterson, Tomas Schmit, Wolf Vostell, and Emmett Williams. The inaugural tour began with a monthlong series of performances held at the lecture hall of the Museum Wiesbaden in West Germany, and then continued to various sites across Europe: Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Paris, Düsseldorf, Stockholm, Oslo, and Nice.¹



Fig 2. Dick Higgins performing George Brecht's *Drip Music (Drip Event)*, Nikolajkirche, Copenhagen, November 1962. Photo by Poul Hansen for *Dagbladet AKTUEL* newspaper.



Fig 3. George Maciunas performing George Brecht's *Drip Music (Drip Event)*, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, February 1963. Digital Image © Kunstpalast / ARTOTHEK. Photograph Manfred Leve / © Estate of Manfred Leve.



Over the course of the tour, *Drip Music* was performed at least ten times and never by Brecht himself. In Copenhagen's Nikolajkirche in late 1962, Higgins, dressed in concert attire, climbed halfway up a wooden ladder and poured water in a slight arc from a teapot into a large aluminum tub on the floor (fig. 2). The details of this performance, conducted with utter seriousness, seemed designed for maximum comedic effect. *Drip Music* performed in this way continued to appear in subsequent concerts and has come to constitute the work's standard presentation.

In February 1963, the Fluxus tour traveled to Germany for a two-day concert series hosted by Joseph Beuys at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, where *Drip Music* was performed twice more under the direction of Maciunas. Constituting a kind of supplemental score for Brecht's piece, Maciunas wrote in advance to Beuys, requesting: "1. A free-standing ladder, as high as possible," "2. a water bucket, large or small," and "3. a can."² As a second-order articulation of the work, Maciunas's list indicated his understanding of the score's language as a generic, flexible outline for an action defined by a set of loose coordinates pertaining to time, space, and materiality, which were to be fully fleshed out by the performer in the context of a specific performance situation. Ultimately, his first performance of the piece in Düsseldorf was an exaggeration of the way Higgins had done it; standing yet higher on the ladder, Maciunas's small frame made a new visual pun in relation to the scale of his oversized pitcher (fig. 3). In a second version performed there, he conducted an orchestra of eyedroppers held aloft in the hands of seven performers, including Williams, Schmit, and Paik, as well as Arthur Kørpcke and Daniel Spoerri (fig. 4).

Brecht's own first public performance of *Drip Music* would not come until April 1963 during a concert of "Happenings, Events, and Advanced Musics" at

Fig 4. Fluxus members performing George Brecht's *Drip Music (Drip Event)*, conducted by George Maciunas, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, February 1963. Digital Image © Kunstplast / ARTOTHEK. Photograph Manfred Leve / © Estate of Manfred Leve.



Fig 5. Peter Moore, photo of George Brecht performing *Drip Music (Drip Event)*, Rutgers University, April 1963. © 2020 Barbara Moore / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY, courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

Rutgers University (fig. 5). His unpretentious gestures there did everything to countermand the ironic grandiosity of the European performances and the threat of convention ossifying the work or neutralizing its potential for variability. Dressed plainly and standing on the ground at the level of his audience, Brecht steadied himself with a hand on the leg as he bent over, obscuring his facial expression, to pour water from an elegant pitcher into a teacup at no significant height at all. Maciunas's Amsterdam performance a few months later, in June, seemed to have understood Brecht's version as an implicit protest against the conventionalization of the piece. Sans ladder and standing on the ground, Maciunas held out a glass bottle and released a slight stream of water that fell into a shallow pan at his feet. Throughout this period, Brecht maintained a generous position toward interpreters of his scores, saying, "It's implicit in the scores that any realisation is feasible. . . . Any and every. I wouldn't refuse any realisations."³

While one might simply credit the flexibility and iterativity of Brecht's event scores to the features of written language, *Drip Music's* composition as a text was in fact neither the beginning nor the end of this work, for there were at least as many performance and object versions made before and after its writing as a score. Preliminary sketches of *Drip Music* that appear in Brecht's notebook of April 1959 reveal the artist coming to the idea first through arrangements of material objects. In a sketch titled *Burette Music*, named after the laboratory mechanism that enables the precise control of the rate of liquid flow—known in scientific par-

lance as *flux*—the artist depicts a contraption in which droplets of water released from a burette would travel through a mass of crumpled foil set into a drinking glass.⁴ In yet another version detailed on the page, water would drip down over strips of paper and foil attached to a length of string as if it were the tail of a kite. Years later in 1964, a photograph taken by Peter Moore at the New York Fluxhall/Fluxshop, a second-floor loft space at 359 Canal Street that operated for a time as the group’s headquarters, shows a wet rag hung over the handle of a watering can and an adjacent, misspelled sign reading “Goerge Brecht Drip Music,” seemingly in the looping handwriting of French Fluxus associate Ben Vautier (fig. 6). A strange hybrid between sculpture and performance, this arrangement of props seems to be a sculpture that performs, or conversely, a performance in sculptural form. Brecht, too, would make a series of performative sculptures, also called *Drip Music*, including a 1966 version in which a burette is mounted on a wooden stand in order to release water into a bottle below. Even later, the artist fabricated a version of *Drip Music* for the garden of collector and publisher of multiples Wolfgang Feelisch (fig. 7). An elongated metal pipe surmounted by a petite faucet that can

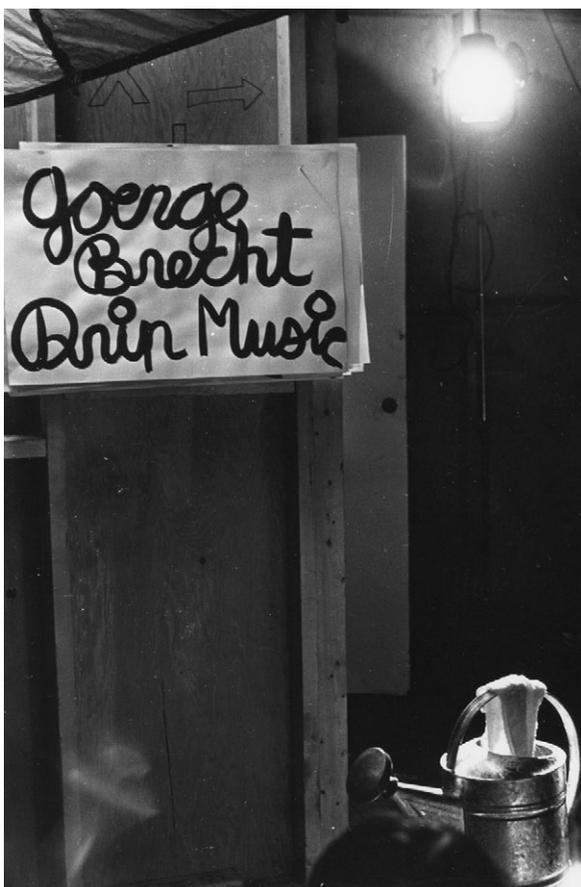


Fig 6. Peter Moore, photo of prop for performance of George Brecht’s *Drip Music (Drip Event)* at Fluxhall/Fluxshop, New York, 1964. © 2020 Barbara Moore / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY, courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

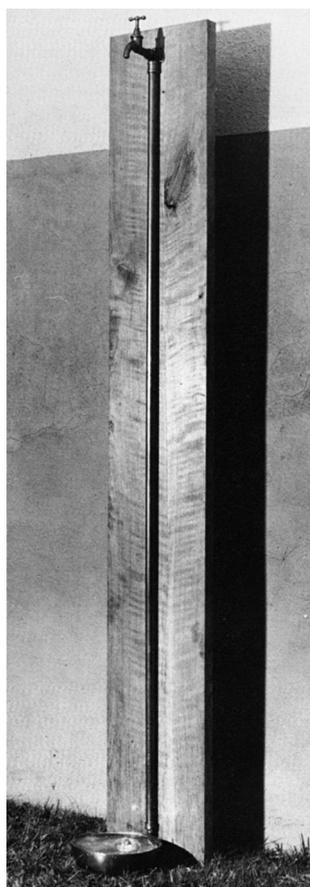


Fig 7. George Brecht, *Drip Music*, c. 1970. Collection of Wolfgang and Ute Feelisch, Remscheid, Germany. © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.



Fig 8. Nam June Paik performing *Zen for Head* at Fluxus Festspiele Neuester Musik at the Museum Wiesbaden, Germany, September 1962, a realization of La Monte Young, *Composition #10 (to Bob Morris)* (“Draw a straight line and follow it”). Photo: Harmut Rekort. DPA/Gottert/Landov.

be adjusted to drip water at varying frequencies into a bowl on the ground, the work’s ludicrous tallness evokes the drama of Higgins and Maciunas’s initial performances.

Shortly after the late 1962 launch of Fluxus, Maciunas wrote to Paik: “One can’t just perform the same single think [*sic*] over & over & over & over. We try to vary every piece in each performance.”⁵ Although it may simply have been an orthographic error, it is quite possible that Maciunas’s use of the word “think” here meant to call up the idea of performing the same interpretational concept (“think” rather than “thing”) for a piece over and over. By the time Maciunas began drawing up plans for a 1966 Fluxfest in Prague (which never materialized), he proposed a version of *Drip Music* that threatened to be a complete rewriting of the work: “First performer on a tall ladder pours water from a pitcher or pail very slowly down into the bell of a french horn or tuba held by the second.”⁶ Paik was among the Fluxus artists to take Maciunas’s directive most seriously. His well-known performance at Wiesbaden, *Zen for Head*, in which he painted a line of ink and tomato juice with his head, hands, and necktie, was itself a realization of La Monte Young’s *Composition 1960 #10 (to Bob Morris)* (“Draw a straight line and follow it”) (fig. 8).

This manner of realizing a work beyond the bounds of reason, convention, or the original author's intention was central to the Fluxus project as summed up in a 1963 manifesto crafted by Maciunas from a dictionary definition of "flux," which called for "a revolutionary flood and tide in art" propelled by continuous movement and change, along with an ambitious call to "fuse" revolutionary artists into a collaborative and "united front & action" (fig. 9). The diversity of Fluxus realizations of a given score aimed to test how the relations described in it might be realized or discovered otherwise, in an unforeseen way. Higgins gave to this quality of the Fluxus work the name "exemplativism," explained in his "Exemplativist Manifesto" (1976):

Any realization . . . will necessarily be to some extent arbitrary, and is therefore an example rather than a fixity. For this reason, such art can be called exemplative. The emphasis rests on precisely what the work is an example of, and not on the precise structure or realization of the work . . . Since this process stresses not the single realization as the work, but the dialectic between any single realization and its alternates, for many exemplative works the method and format of the notation are far more crucial than in the works of the cognitive past. The look of the written text, the graphic element of the musical notation, the prescription for the dramatic presentation—in exemplative works, much of the meaning interfaces here with the work as the final audience will see it. In fact in such a system *all form is a process of notation*, among other things. The audience sees or senses the bare bones of the work along with the flesh, so the clarity with which these bare bones are assembled becomes a criterion of the value of the work.⁷

For each new exemplification of a work, then, the constellation of existing realizations would have to make room. Event scores were not regarded as master scripts but simply as one of many possible realizations of a given work. Moreover, in such a system, aesthetic form becomes less fixed and more structural, a matter of processes and procedures rather than qualities that are visible and stable. This approach to artistic production accounts for the flexibility in Brecht's practice as to whether a score or an object would come first, as well as for Fluxus artists' tendency to welcome the creative reinterpretation of their work by their peers.

The foundation of Fluxus practice on event scores such as Brecht's gave rise to what I call in this book "the artwork in flux"—artworks in diverse materials that have in common qualities of transitivity, variability, and a transformed relationship to authorship, labor, and distribution owed to their foundation in notational devices. A crucial origin for this work was John Cage's experimental composition course at the New School for Social Research in New York, which Brecht attended during the summers of 1958 and 1959.⁸ His experience there alongside classmates

Manifesto:

2. To affect, or bring to a certain state, by subjecting to, or treating with, a flux. "Fluxed into another world." *South.*

3. *Med.* To cause a discharge from, as in purging.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Higgins, Al Hansen, Allan Kaprow, and Jackson Mac Low coincided with a turning point in Cage's own practice toward his most extremely chance-derived scores. Brecht was thus able to observe close at hand how scores could operate in an indeterminate or ambiguous relationship to their realization. Brecht developed the event score in this context as a means of sketching out performance works without recourse to traditional musical notation and of incorporating perceptual phenomena beyond sound.

Whether imperative or merely propositional, the Brechtian event score involves the arrangement of objects and actions in spatial and temporal relationships. Above all, it is open and generative, embodying the potential for an immense range of actions to take place in its wake. According to Brecht, the inspiration for his first so-named event score, *Motor Vehicle Sundown (Event)* (1960), came from an ordinary experience:

In the Spring of 1960, standing in the woods in East Brunswick, New Jersey, where I lived at the time, waiting for my wife to come from the house, standing behind my English Ford station wagon, the motor running and the left-turn signal blinking, it occurred to me that a wholly "event" piece could be drawn from the situation. Three months later the first piece explicitly titled an "event" was finished, the "Motor Vehicle Sundown (Event)."⁹

This story indicates that Brecht's notion of the event was not only indebted to Cage (the piece was in fact dedicated to him); it also extended the interpretation of Dada artist Marcel Duchamp's readymade beyond its association with the everyday object, expanding its capacity to reframe everyday experiences and gestures as art. To Brecht's approval, Maciunas later described his event scores as "temporal readymades."¹⁰ Brecht's innovation was to reimagine the artwork not as a fixed material entity but as a perceptual "event" framed by the artist—a multidimensional, multi-sensorial phenomenon carved out of lived space-time in order that it may be recast as art.¹¹

By 1961, Brecht had begun to copy his scores by mimeograph onto various sizes of paper and send them to artist friends through the mail. He also placed them in literary journals and in the groundbreaking compendium of experimental notation *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, edited by Young and designed by Maciunas. And, of course, they were performed in the earliest proto-Fluxus concerts. Following the launch of Fluxus in 1962, Brecht's scores were regularly included in Fluxus anthologies and collected in the first monographic Fluxus publication *Water Yam* (1963), a matchbox-like cardboard container enclosing seventy-some of the artist's scores printed individually on cardstock (fig. 10).¹² Quickly taken up and developed in myriad directions by many other artists, the Brechtian event score became one of the first paradigms of the Fluxus group's multidimensional

career there, he held five patents and two co-patents for designs of women's tampons and tampon applicators, the outcome of his studies of "the properties of menstrual fluid and the mechanics of fibrous absorption systems."¹⁵ The earliest of these is dated February 11, 1958, just five months before Brecht's first enrollment in Cage's experimental composition course. Alongside his day job, Brecht produced a series of *Chance Paintings*, which sought to reconcile Jackson Pollock's approach to abstract painting with Dada- and Surrealist-inspired engagements with chance through a technique of indeterminate dripping and staining.

Brecht's connoisseurial interest in drips brought together a whole constellation of phenomena defined by transient and shapeshifting form, form set into relation with other forms, form unsettled from any one fixed, material locus. Such works' overflowing of their own borders continued with the versions of Brecht's *Drip Music* orchestrated by Maciunas in both solo and ensemble versions in the Düsseldorf concert of February 1963 and later on in that program by Paik, who presented his *Fluxus Champion Contest* (1962). For this piece, Paik observed with a stopwatch five male performers urinate into a bucket, each singing his country's national anthem, in order to determine who could piss the longest (and thus whose country was best). The bucket used was the same as for Maciunas's solo realization of *Drip Music*, suggesting a contiguity of Brecht's score and Paik's contest, which might be considered an actualization—five times over—of *Drip Music*.¹⁶ Looking to a wider range of Fluxus works, next to Brecht and Paik's drips there was Schmit's *Zyklus for Water-Pails* (1962), which entailed a prolonged round of dripping as the performer, positioned inside a circular arrangement of open containers, transferred a volume of water from one vessel to the next until all the water disappeared through spillage or evaporation (fig. 11). Drips recurred in object-based works by other Fluxus artists as well. Ben Vautier collected murky water to be neatly packaged and labeled for sale by Fluxus as *Dirty Water* (1963).



Fig 11. Tomas Schmit, *Zyklus for Water-Pails*, 1962. Performed during Internationaal Programma Nieuwste Muziek, Nieuwste Theater, Nieuwste Literatuur, De Kleine Komedie, Amsterdam, December 18, 1963. Gelatin silver print. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2694.2008.

Mieko Shiomi collected water in tiny bottles labeled *Water Music* (1964) with the instruction “Give the water still form/Let the water lose its still form.” Maciunas’s experimental *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings* of 1961, for which he captured spectacular whorls of diluted India ink, were an engagement with fluids that throughout the period of his Fluxus publishing efforts blossomed into an exploration of the flux and flow of all manners of exchange, including the interpersonal and bodily.

This array of Fluxus drips illustrates how *Drip Music* evolved beyond its role as an originary textual source to become nothing like a source at all but merely one realization among many other nonhierarchically relatable, possible realizations of works that would continue unfolding apart from the oversight of their original authors—continuously, endlessly dripping their way into existence. For in the universe of Fluxus, an artwork could be derived from the observation of an everyday phenomenon, and this phenomenon could be transformed into a string of words, and this string of words could become a person on a ladder dripping water from a pitcher, and this dripping water from a pitcher could become a sopping rag, and this sopping rag could become a leaky faucet, and this leaky faucet could become a scientific instrument—and on and on and on, unceasingly. In the final instance, artistic form reimaged after the model of the score no longer relied on a piece of paper or a text but on the idea of a transmutable and resilient form that *travels*. An emblematic Fluxus work, Brecht’s *Drip Music* has become a continuous flow or flux, ever emerging through a continuous series of appearances across multiple spatiotemporal and material coordinates. Each time the work is performed, each time Brecht crafted a new apparatus under its name, each time someone recognizes the dripping song of freshly watered flowerpots (as Brecht’s mother once did, to the artist’s delight), the artwork reveals another dimension of its formal possibilities, another valence of its potential meaning.¹⁷ The Fluxus innovation of the event score made this unusual kind of artwork possible. It enabled a dialectical marriage of the abstract and concrete, a turn to language only so that the artwork could be perpetually remade for the present, a work enabled by the score format to remain in-becoming, forever as-yet. And this artwork in flux would—or will, we should say—never be final, for someone or something will drip tomorrow, and the day after that, and so on and so on and so on. Without end. No actualization can be prioritized over another, as each is, in its own right, correct and singular. As Brecht himself once assured us, “No catastrophes are possible.”¹⁸

* * *

It is often recounted how Fluxus made its public debut in September 1962 with an ambitious four-week performance series held in the concert hall of the Museum Wiesbaden. These events, along with a series of preview concerts held over the summer months in Wuppertal, Düsseldorf, and Paris, launched a European



Fig 12. Philip Corner, *Piano Activities*, 1962. Performed during Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik, Hörsaal des Städtischen Museums, Wiesbaden, Germany, September 1, 1962. Gelatin silver print. Performers depicted include Emmett Williams, Alison Knowles, George Maciunas, Dick Higgins, and Benjamin Patterson. Photographed by Deutsche Presse Agentur. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2126.2008.

Fluxus tour that unfolded throughout the winter and into the spring of 1963. These legendary inaugural Fluxus evenings were the ones in which Paik, interpreting Young's *Composition 1960 #10*, inked a line with his head; Patterson, realizing his *Variations for Double-Bass* (1961–1962), ate cereal from the head of his instrument; and a group of performers including Higgins, Knowles, Maciunas, Patterson, Vostell, and Williams demolished a grand piano in a rendition of Philip Corner's *Piano Activities* (1962) (Corner himself was not in attendance) (fig. 12). The Fluxus antics in Wiesbaden were reported on German television, and posters advertising the concerts were soon found etched with the defamation "THE CRAZIES ARE ON THE LOOSE." Yet the launch of Fluxus was actually, much like Brecht's

Drip Music, a kind of dripping in and of itself, in which the idea of Fluxus was disseminated slowly, commingling with other emergent neo-avant-garde practices until, by 1963, it had escalated into a flood of events and projects that were internationally visible, if still relatively marginal to the mainstreams of advanced art of the time. It was through these events, described by Maciunas as “neo-dada” music and theater and thus rooted in the frameworks and aesthetic structures of those time-based and collaboratively produced disciplines, that Fluxus works met their first audiences.

It has gone remarkably unremarked, however, that an earlier moment of Fluxus visibility can be traced to an event held almost a year prior at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in relation to *The Art of Assemblage*, a sprawling survey of modern and contemporary assemblage art going back to Cubism. Staged at the turn of the 1960s, *The Art of Assemblage* presented a young generation of American and European artists whose work revived early twentieth-century Dada and Surrealist strategies centered on the found object. This revival was part of a critical response to abstract expressionist painting, modernist commitments to medium specificity, and the expanding commercialization of art and everyday life. Retrospectively, one can understand the exhibition as a snapshot *in medias res* of neo-avant-garde currents that would eventually acquire separate names, among them Pop, New Realism, Happenings and, of course, Fluxus, whose turn to the everyday was particularly performative and interactive. Among these tendencies, novel ways of engaging the spectator were tested via a multitude of new object-based formats, suggesting that the “crisis of the object” first declared by Surrealist artist and critic André Breton in 1936 did not truly see its moment until the 1960s.¹⁹ Over the course of the decade, artworks were enlarged to the scale of engulfing environments, made to move, solicited the viewer’s touch, were made more widely distributed and available, were brought out into the streets, and even at times sought to evade or abandon the art world altogether.

On October 19, 1961, Maciunas’s “Fluxus” movement was mentioned for the first time to a large public during a panel discussion convened on the occasion of *The Art of Assemblage*. That day, the show’s curator William Seitz sat alongside critic and curator Lawrence Alloway, historian Roger Shattuck, Dada artists Richard Huelsenbeck and Marcel Duchamp, and “neo-dadaist” Robert Rauschenberg. Maciunas was in the audience. During the question-and-answer period, Seitz read aloud one of Maciunas’s write-in questions, mispronouncing the artist’s name and citing him as the editor of a Fluxus magazine that did not yet exist.²⁰ The question was directed to Shattuck, who in his remarks had dismissed contemporary neo-dada tendencies as a lesser reprise of historical avant-garde precedents, a position typical of this moment that was also forwarded in the exhibition catalogue.²¹ “When depreciating the neo-dada works,” the Fluxus chairman asked with passive aggression, “did Mr. Shattuck refer also to

the significant examples of American and West European neo-dada music and theater?” Maciunas’s query was an implicit defense of the time-based practices with which he aligned himself—he had recently hosted a series of experimental music concerts at his own AG Gallery—as much as it was an effort to distinguish those practices from the more conservative vision of neo-dada represented by the highly formal compositions featured in Seitz’s exhibition. In response to Maciunas’s question, Shattuck redoubled his critique of object-based neo-dada works. Yet in doing so, he unexpectedly allied himself with the art that Maciunas sought to vindicate, as if he intuitively grasped or had a premonition of the aesthetic codes that would become the basis of Fluxus:

I don’t think we’re at all concerned with a creative act. We’re concerned with an enormous *seepage* of art into life. All these Happenings that we’ve been talking about, the Readymades, everything else, have to do with something *dripping* back into life in terms which we are not quite able to reckon with. . . . This is what is disappointing to me in the show upstairs, because all the frames are rectangular as they “ought” to be, sealing art off which shouldn’t be sealed off.²²

Maciunas’s question to the panel implied neo-avant-garde practices that went a step beyond incorporating everyday objects into the formal frames of painting and sculpture. These practices drew their revolutionary potential not only from the object model of the Dada readymade but also from experimental music and performance, which had expanded and extended the work of art in space and time and prompted a turn to score-based practices newly iterative, collaborative, and participatory in nature. The result, as Shattuck described, had brought about a “seepage” and “dripping” of the work as an ontological entity and an author-work relation that differed fundamentally from the autographic arts of painting and sculpture.

Indeed, much proto-Fluxus work was being presented at the time not within a visual arts context but as part of a fledgling new music scene. For instance, “A Concert of New Music,” held at the Living Theatre on March 14, 1960, included the first two compositions Brecht had written for Cage’s experimental composition course. *Candle-Piece for Radio* (June–August 1959) and *Card-Piece for Voice* (July 1959) were presented alongside works by Cage, Rauschenberg, Kaprow, and Richard Maxfield. On January 8, 1962, Brecht’s work appeared on the program of a concert to raise funds for *An Anthology of Chance Operations*.²³ This landmark publication, edited by Young, co-published by Young and Mac Low, and designed by Maciunas, gathered together an astonishing variety of performance instructions, theoretical proclamations, concrete poetry, and graphic notations from a group of artists whose practices would soon be sorted into separate categories of experimental and electronic music, Fluxus, dance, theater, performance art, poetry, and

the like, but which at this transitional moment appeared as part of one continuous milieu. At the fundraiser, held at the Living Theatre, Brecht performed his *Comb Music (Comb Event)* (1959–1962), a companion piece to *Drip Music*, shortly before the evening's pièce de résistance: Earle Brown personally conducting his indeterminate, graphically notated score *December 1952* (1952), collectively realized by sixteen performers including Corner, Mac Low, Young, Joseph Byrd, Simone Forti, Terry Jennings, and Charlotte Moorman.²⁴

Fluxus's alignment with developments in experimental music and theater in New York was also reflected in other early moments of its visibility there, such as at AG Gallery, which Maciunas opened with fellow Lithuanian-American Almus Salcius at 925 Madison Avenue in early 1961. Maciunas hosted performances at AG of works by composers and artists including Brown, Cage, Higgins, Mac Low, Maxfield, Young, Walter De Maria, and Toshi Ichihyanagi under the series "Musica Antiqua et Nova." His programming was a less rigorous, more ecumenical response to the experimental art and performance series organized by Young at Yoko Ono's Chambers Street loft in 1960–1961. For example, Maciunas himself led a three-part lecture-demonstration on "musical concretism" through the ages, from polyphonic medieval and Renaissance music (charmingly termed by Maciunas in promotional materials as "polychrome" music) to Anton Webern, Edgard Varèse, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Cage, and ending with magnetic tape music from the United States, Europe, and Japan. The advertising mailer for the educational series included the first mention in print of a "FLUXUS" magazine whose publication would be supported by proceeds from Maciunas's course.

Before Fluxus programming at AG really got off the ground, however, the gallery folded that very summer, with Maciunas fleeing the country and his debts to take up a graphic design post with the US military in Wiesbaden, Germany. Once abroad, Maciunas connected with a West German network of experimental musicians, visual artists, and poets including Paik, Patterson, Vostell, and Williams, in a place where advanced intermedia dialogues were already well underway. The networked centers for this work included the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (recently visited by Tudor and Cage) and circle of concrete poets including Spoerri and Claus Bremer in Darmstadt; Jean-Pierre Wilhelm's Galerie 22 and Alfred Schmela's Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf; the Westdeutscher Rundfunk electronic music studio and atelier of painter Mary Bauermeister in Cologne; and Rolf and Annelise Jährling's Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal.

Relying on the personal connections of Paik and Wilhelm, by December 1961 Maciunas was in conversation with the director of the Museum Wiesbaden about hosting a concert series there, a proposal that eventually came to fruition in September 1962. But parts of the Wiesbaden Fluxus program were leaked ahead of time, presented before a German audience in the concert "Kleinen Sommerfest—Après John Cage" organized by Maciunas, Paik, and Patterson and held at Galerie



Parnass on June 9, 1962. Here the word “Fluxus” appeared, again, only in print on the invitation card, as the title of Maciunas’s yet-to-appear publishing project. And here, again, this proto-movement was allied with a presentation of experimental time-based art forms as mapped out by Maciunas in both a manifesto-like text, “Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art” (read aloud in German translation by theater director Arthus Caspari), and an impressive paper banner spanning the stage in which neo-avant-garde practices were graphically charted along a continuum of time-space arts (figs. 13, 14).²⁵ The printed names of many artists who would join under the figurative banner of Fluxus appeared together there, crowded under the categories of music, theater, and graphics—categories further subdivided into those of “space-time” and “time-space arts,” including “graphic literature,” “graphic music,” and “diagrammatic music.” The next week, another proto-Fluxus concert was staged at the Düsseldorf Kammerspiele, introduced with a speech by Wilhelm, and in early July, Patterson and Filliou mounted a “sneak preview” of Fluxus work at Galerie Girardon in Paris.

This is all to say that before the official launch of Fluxus in September 1962, the conditions of the collective’s complex, mercurial performance practice and approach to object-making had already been well set. In Maciunas’s text read at the June 9 “Kleinen Sommerfest,” for example, he called for an art form that would operate, much like a musical score, as:

Fig 13. Unknown photographer with George Maciunas and Arthus Carlheinz Caspari. Arthus C. Caspari reading George Maciunas’s manifesto “Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art” in German translation during Kleinen Sommerfest—Après John Cage, Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, West Germany, June 9, 1962. Gelatin silver print. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2264.2008.

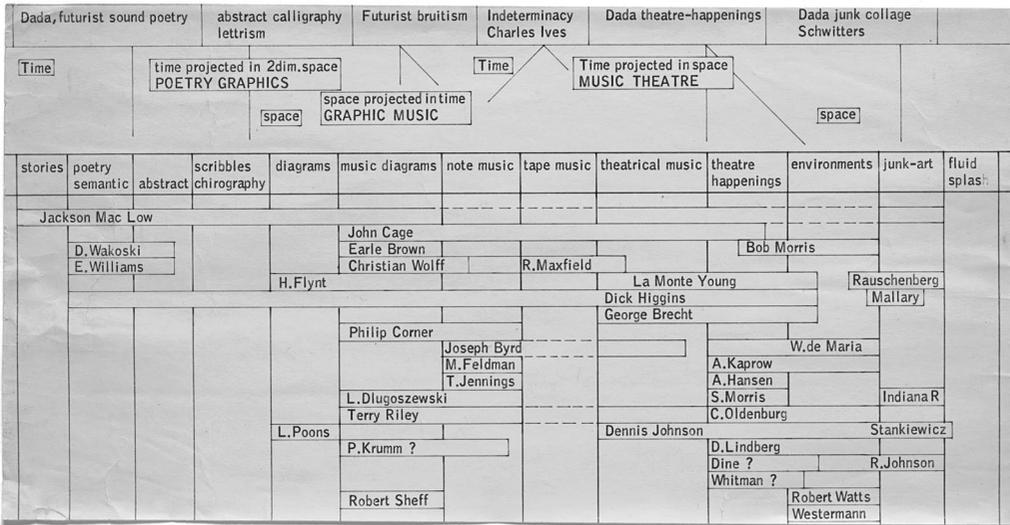


Fig 14. George Maciunas, *Time/time projected in 2 dim. space POETRY GRAPHICS/ space/space projected in time GRAPHIC MUSIC/Time/Time projected in space MUSIC THEATER/ space*, c. 1962. Diazotype. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2382.2008. By permission of Billie J. Maciunas, PhD.

an “automatic machine” within which or by which, nature (either in the form of an independent performer or indeterminate-chance compositional methods) can complete the art-form, effectively and independently of the artist-composer. Thus the primary contribution of a truly concrete artist consists in creating a *concept* or a *method* by which form can be created independently of him.²⁶

According to these terms, Fluxus would be based in a notational practice, enabling the work to adapt to an infinite variety of contexts. The work’s encoding in the medium of textual and graphic notation, specifically in the format of the event score, facilitated its dialectical shuttling between abstract and “concrete” instantiations, making it widely distributable and iterative. Soon, works like Brecht’s *Drrip Music*, without fixed object status or form and reimagined and staged over and over again by numerous subjects—an exemplary artwork in flux—would deliver the news of Fluxus all over Europe and beyond.

* * *

This book explores the fate of the artwork in Fluxus as the collective’s members abandoned modernist aesthetics and ontologies premised on the work of art being a unique, single-authored object. Instead, through the formats of the event score, the multiple or “Fluxbox,” and a network of artist-run “Fluxshops,” Fluxus promoted a notation-based model of artistic practice invested in the collaborative authorship of works that could appear in multiple versions across multiple mediums. Fluxus artists scripted scores for everyday actions and constructed assemblages of quotidian objects with which audiences were invited to interact. Informed by the iterative structure of music and the processual quality of certain veins of mid-twentieth-century abstract painting, Fluxus’s collectively produced artworks were made from the dross of everyday life and maintained a shifting, transmutable material status. This radical object model—of the artwork in flux—

proposed to transform conventions of artistic objecthood and value, and practically ensured Fluxus's marginalization. The artwork in flux was a complex marriage of conceptual form with concrete materiality. It reconfigured not only the artwork as a material entity, but also artistic authorship, labor, and the systems of art's distribution in ways that have been carried forth by later generations of artists and which can now be appreciated as prescient for their time.

Existing art-historical accounts of Fluxus highlight the primary, irreducible "non-hierarchical density of experience" that arises from encounters with Fluxus performances and objects, understanding the work in phenomenological terms as provoking perceptually transformative experience.²⁷ Other scholarship, focused on the linguistic properties of event scores, has clarified the role of language in Fluxus's framing of everyday phenomena as readymade works of art and has thus identified Fluxus with the first moment of a "conceptual turn" in postwar artistic practice.²⁸ Yet others have dealt in various ways with Fluxus's mimicry of 1960s commodity and institutional cultures, acknowledging the collective's failed ambitions while illuminating its modest successes.²⁹ After long neglecting this movement, art history has by now affirmed the importance of Fluxus in the history of postwar art.

Still, the status of the object and its complicated existence across the collective's diverse output remains under-analyzed. Art institutions and the popular press continue to characterize Fluxus as an "anti-art, anti-object" movement while traces of Fluxus production increasingly populate museum collections as undeniably formal, material things.³⁰ The need for object-focused analysis has only become more apparent as Fluxus works have entered institutional collections as *objects*, however provisional or ephemeral they may be.³¹ If anything is certain, the Fluxus event score did not simply allow for art objects to become irrelevant or disappear. Rather, the model of the event score provided a framework through which the artwork could survive as an entity through myriad transformations at the same time that its variability enacted a dismantling, unworking, and reconstruction of the very meaning of form.³²

Fluxus's reputation as an uncategorizable art movement persists due to its unorthodox output and the infamous conflicts among its participants. In response, this book's foremost aims are to explain certain formal operations and material choices that run consistently throughout Fluxus artists' unusual practices and to account for their intellectual and art-historical contexts. My chapters trace in chronological progression the development of signal Fluxus formats through close examinations of the activities of artists who were central to innovating those formats. In making a selective cut through Fluxus, I make claims that apply broadly to the collective's endeavors. I focus on three key figures who worked primarily in Germany, France, and the United States: George Maciunas (Lithuanian-American, 1931–1978), George Brecht (American, 1926–2008), and

Robert Filliou (French, 1926–1987). (The voice of Dick Higgins [American, 1938–1998] also appears throughout, given that his writings provide early and particularly eloquent historical and theoretical accounts of Fluxus.) My chapters trace these artists' development of the event score, Fluxbox, and Fluxshop as they confronted established material conventions and work ontologies pertaining to the mediums of music, painting, theater, dance, and sculpture as well as prevailing economic models within and outside the art world. I address the influence of both experimental music and abstract expressionist painting on Fluxus's intellectual formation and aesthetics. I attend to the artists' engagement with the overlapping problematics of sculpture, the readymade, and the commodity—or, more simply, the “object”—vis-à-vis postwar consumer culture. The book's narrative concludes with the beginning of the group's splintering and dissolution by the 1970s into various communitarian and conceptual projects, prefiguring a vast array of post-studio, intermedia, new media, and participatory art practices that characterize contemporary art of our present. If I often speak of Fluxus in terms of the outsider, of gaps and of holes, this is not to further the collective's marginal status but to insist that such positioning was deliberate on the part of the artists and their work, and quite successful given that awareness of the critical effects of their practice has taken more than fifty years for us to see. Broadly speaking, this book advances art-historical understanding of Fluxus's position in the transitional period from modernism to postmodernism circa 1960, which has increasingly been recognized as foundational to the field of contemporary art history.³³

Fluxus was most indebted to the discipline of music, and so the book's first chapter provides an archaeology of graphic notation in experimental music since the 1950s in order to illuminate the origins and implications of Fluxus's event score model. Beginning with the first spatialized, grid-based graphic notations composed by Morton Feldman in 1950, this chapter trains an art-historical lens on the highly visual notations of Feldman and New York School composer colleagues Earle Brown and John Cage. In so doing, I isolate a diagrammatic or diagram-like order of visualization that links their work to significant moments in the history of twentieth-century art, including Wassily Kandinsky's theories of form and drawing, El Lissitzky's Prouns, and Dada's mechanomorphs. In these diagram-like works, the organizing principle of form is owed to a topological structure of force relations maintained despite changes in scale and materials, rather than the conventional art-historical tropes of visual mimesis or compositional balance. What the New York School's graphic notations or musical diagrams singularly imparted to Fluxus thinking was the operative, iterative, allographic nature of the musical work—given that they are meant to be performed or put into operation, over and over again. This understanding of form behaving in the manner of a diagram that guides a multitude of performed or materialized manifestations, I argue, became the founding “diagram” for Fluxus production. However, even as I consider New

York School graphic notations under the figure of the diagram, this chapter examines where and how, by 1958, certain scores, particularly Cage's highly indeterminate *Variations* series, began to depart from that model. Alongside Cagean models of chance, I argue for the importance of Brown's notion of ambiguity to the Fluxus event score, particularly as seen in the works of Brecht. Eventually, the score model is released from its attachment to a founding text and turned into an operation or activity of reading in which any material whatsoever may be appropriated as a kind of notation open to interpretation and reinscription.

While chapter 1 addresses Fluxus's origins in music, chapter 2 sheds new light on what Fluxus inherited from modern painting. Fluxus was the project of a generation of artists who emerged under the shadow of the New York School painters and were commonly trained in the style of gestural painting, yet felt that abstract expressionism was exhausted. Artists from Andy Warhol to Robert Morris arrived at productive (mis)readings of Jackson Pollock's technique, and Happenings figurehead Allan Kaprow saw in Pollock's work an invitation to designate entire environments as art and adopt the materials of everyday life. For Fluxus artists working in the American context, the implications of Pollock's drip were most consequential, and they absorbed his work in a unique way. Chapter 2 examines a selection of Fluxus "drips" that marked a way of relating to, and simultaneously away from, modes of modernist art still dominant at the end of the 1950s. These Fluxus drips include Brecht's early chance-based stain paintings, "Chance-Imagery" essay, and foundational score *Drip Music*, along with Maciunas's little-known *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings* (1961). If the Fluxus event score inherited from music a formal model of the diagram as a mobile, infinitely interpretable structure, these engagements with the painterly drip were affiliated with the diagram's dialectical counterpoint—one that we can identify, following Gilles Deleuze, as the immanent organizing principle of a given material. In other words, a material like paint has an inherent physical "diagram" that organizes the forms it can take, a diagram that finds its operational analogy in other materials that drip, bleed, and splatter. Fluxus artists' painterly and performative works reimagined the abstract expressionist gesture through a matrix of process, indeterminacy, and careful attention to the physical properties and formal potential of various liquid materials, ultimately arriving at a transformed understanding of artistic form and objecthood. Alongside their experiments with diverse forms of notation, this model opened crucial pathways for art after modernism, as form became more and more a function of notated processes and procedures, and materials were chosen not for what they looked like but for how they might demonstrate the vicissitudes of their own physical existence—over and over again. The two dimensions of the diagram that we see in operation across Fluxus—the abstract, and now, the concrete—were not contradictory, I argue, but in fact complementary valences of a diagrammatic approach to form that continued to shape Fluxus practice through the years.

Chapter 3 focuses on the fundamental interrelation between Fluxus scores and objects. Taking as its primary example the work of George Brecht, the chapter returns to Brecht's participation in Cage's experimental composition courses of 1958–1959. Coincident with Brecht's first New York gallery exhibition, this period offers an exemplary view onto the dialectical co-development in his practice of event scores that examined the object-like quality of language, and objects—which I call “notational objects”—that suggested score-like qualities of enaction. Building on chapter 1's account of Fluxus event scores, I compare their characteristically neutral language with Higgins's notions of the “blank image” and “exemplativism” and Morris's notion, associated with minimalism, of “blank form.” I demonstrate that the notational object's interactive, performative qualities draw from the event score's enactive logic even when a score may not be present—a unique advancement of the logic of the readymade according to a Fluxus understanding of an aesthetics of the “concrete,” which refuses to divorce the everyday object from its original functions.

Chapter 4 focuses on the central format of Fluxus object production, the Fluxbox multiple. Produced in unnumbered, unlimited editions, Fluxboxes are typically containerized, game-like kits with graphic labels, inside of which one finds small objects—typically readymade, cast-off thingamajigs and trinkets of little inherent value with which beholders can interact, thereby performing a Fluxus event *in situ*. Maciunas, who saw Brecht's event scores as paradigmatic for Fluxus, applied the iterative quality of the score to the invention of a format that imagined the artwork as an interactive, miniature collection. In this chapter, I argue that the Fluxbox manifests the event score's diagrammatic principles of connectivity and transmutability by promoting the endless exercise of matching objects like-to-like, as if difference could eventually be made to disappear. If the Fluxus artwork seeks to evade a fixed materialization by its dispersal through a network of forms, it also provides a powerful model of the Fluxus subject: intersubjective and mortal, it gains meaning and value through its participation in a creative system. For example, when we open Vautier's *Flux Holes* (1964) as designed/interpreted by Maciunas, we do not know whether we will find metal washers, straws, a sink strainer, or a photograph showing the cavernous bell of a tuba (see fig. 41). Fluxboxes demonstrate a boundless, promiscuously taxonomic model of thought that encourages us to locate ever more holes in our surroundings and defies the very principle of containability that the boxes seemingly propose. Moreover, we constantly encounter holes not only in Vautier's boxes but across countless Fluxus works—holes to look through, holes to penetrate, holes through which things may enter or fall out. This should not be surprising, for one definition of Fluxus appropriated by Maciunas for his 1963 manifesto reads: “A flowing or fluid discharge from the bowels or other part; esp., an excessive and morbid discharge; as, the bloody *flux*, or dysentery.” As a corollary to the Fluxboxes' logic of endless

connectivity and indiscriminate taxonomization, I argue that these many Fluxus holes manifest transitional experiences and, to borrow a psychoanalytic concept, function as transitional objects, or (in my theorization) “transitional commodities.” They also point to the threat of entropy, absence, and loss, calling attention to the absolute material presence of the thing-at-hand, reminding us that the artwork, like the body, will eventually deteriorate and disappear. A discussion of Maciunas’s publishing activities in this chapter provides the salutary opportunity to address the work of other important Fluxus artists, including Knowles, Patterson, Shiomi, Vautier, Ay-O, Dieter Roth, Takako Saito, and Robert Watts. By way of analyzing the Fluxboxes, this chapter also addresses the format’s relationship to the medium of sculpture, the emergent market for artist’s multiples, and 1960s commodity culture.

While Brecht and Maciunas have figured centrally in existing studies of Fluxus, the contributions of French artist Robert Filliou have been woefully overlooked. Trained as an economist, Filliou’s aesthetic theories were elaborated through poetic writings and artworks such as his series of object-based “suspense poems.” Chapter 5 visits one of the temporary, international outposts of Fluxus with which Filliou was involved: a mail-order art shop in the south of France called *La Cédille qui Sourit* (The Cedilla That Smiles) that Filliou and Brecht ran together from 1965 to 1968. The artists’ activities at the Cédille are discussed alongside Filliou’s aesthetic theories, writings, and artworks, which I argue were a signal contribution to Fluxus’s project of refashioning the art object and its means and systems of production and distribution in the postwar period. In collaboration with Brecht, Filliou attempted to forge an alternative system of ethics counter to the logic of capitalist exchange. While much of his work was focused on mounting overt critiques of both the art market and the greater economy, his most radical gesture was one of dissociation from both. This almost anti-Fluxus tactic of nonparticipation opened up alternative forms of community that were sometimes not even visible to the artist’s international, neo-avant-garde network. While Maciunas’s Fluxboxes powerfully modeled a Fluxus notion of intersubjectivity, Filliou’s “objects without object” (to borrow the title of one of his key works) evinced the paradoxical strength of Fluxus’s disorganized, variegated network of artists and practices, a vast community without community that continues to reproduce itself in the present.

The provisional or fugitive nature of Fluxus objects was echoed in the nature of the collective’s organization, which departed from more centralized community structures that characterize many early twentieth-century avant-gardes. In fact, the Fluxus ethos led to the dissolution of Fluxus itself, as artists participated occasionally and at will while maintaining individual practices, assigning to Fluxus whatever may not have aligned with the rest of their oeuvre. To theorize this condition, chapter 5 considers Filliou’s Fluxus work under the conceptual rubric of

désœuvrement (unworking, idleness) articulated by theorists Maurice Blanchot and Jean-Luc Nancy, which posits the political potential of unproductivity and its relationship to the absence—death—that lay at the heart of every community. Although Maciunas endeavored to establish intentional communities to permanently sustain Fluxus activities, the Cédille employed strategies more widely adopted by Fluxus artists by the late 1960s, pointing beyond the initial contours of Fluxus as Maciunas had imagined it.

Finally, the book's conclusion reflects on the historical legacy and reception of Fluxus in relation to contemporary art practices. Specifically, I challenge the way in which Fluxus has been historicized within new media histories as a proto-internet art movement. Highlighting underappreciated dimensions of the work of celebrated video artist Nam June Paik, among other Fluxus affiliates, I reiterate the dialectical quality of Fluxus works theorized earlier in the book—that they are utopian and “virtual” in terms of the infinite possibilities for their realization and yet also decidedly real, material, and present in how they interface with the unique space-time of their appearance.

Above all, this book argues that Fluxus artists' most important contribution to the history of contemporary art lies in their adaptation of the score format as a model for all kinds of artistic production beyond musical performance. Utilized first in relation to Fluxus concert activities, the score offered Fluxus artists an alternative model of form that provided a logical basis for the creation of objects, a transformed understanding of artistic subjectivity, and an instrument for the collective's ongoing organization. Fluxus artists embraced scores before the rise of minimalism, post-minimalism, conceptualism, and new media art fully realized the “post-medium” condition of contemporary art, in which an artist's medium is defined not by a set of fixed materials but as a recursive structure made and remade in a kind of rule-based improvisation.³⁴ This book argues that Fluxus emerged at the crux of this transformation, and as such, holds a valuable historical key for better understanding the art of our present.³⁵ *Iterative, performative, recursive, and transitive*—these are all terms that have been used to characterize art of the 1960s and thereby distinguish it from modernist precedents. Importantly, these qualities all apply to the notation-based practices that proliferated after 1960, whether the composed score constituted the work in and of itself or was utilized in the process of mounting a performance or event, fabricating an object, or constructing an installation or environment. For their part, Fluxus artists did not treat scores like authoritative, contract-like specifications, and so their compositions remain distinct from the rigorous, administrative, quasi-legalistic notations employed in minimalist and conceptual practices of the late 1960s.³⁶ Opening a pathway for intermedia practices of all kinds, Fluxus scores enabled the transformation of the work of art into a kind of “ontological mutant.”³⁷ The painter Gerhard Richter, who as a thirty-year-old artist witnessed the February 1963 Fluxus concert in Düs-

seldorf, was one to immediately appreciate this: "I want to paint a photograph! Fluxus was the catalyst!"³⁸

Fluxus work often involved gags, bathroom humor, and obsolete or broken objects, and intentionally disappointed expectations that artworks aspire to be beautiful, timeless, or grand. According to some, such moments of ludic rupture, in which the Fluxus work fails to deliver anything but a cheap punch line, ultimately have "minimally redeeming functions."³⁹ As much as Fluxus (or at least Maciunas) proclaimed an ethos of revolution, as a self-described "rear-guard" the collective's aesthetic looked back to vintage graphics and obsolete mass-cultural forms, and employed extremely low-tech ways of doing things.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Andreas Huyssen once made the provocative claim that Fluxus may be the "master-code of postmodernism," pointing to the group's relationship of critical mimesis to late capitalist culture as well as its position as one of the first radical art movements of the postwar period to concede the failure of early twentieth-century avant-garde strategies.⁴¹ Indeed, rather than attempting a resolute, overt critique of the order of things, Fluxus responded to the postwar institutionalization, commodification, and capitalization of art and everyday life with strategies of ironic and pathetic mimesis.

I take seriously Huyssen's claim that we might find in Fluxus a key to cultural life after modernism, but I want to argue as well that this did not undermine its legitimacy as an avant-garde, if we understand the avant-garde to be invested in the bringing together of art and life for the sake of imagining and bringing forth symbolic (if not real) political transformation. Given Fluxus's mirroring of consumer culture and its critical reorientation of our expectations of that culture, can we not appreciate Fluxus as an avant-garde project perfectly figured for the postmodern era? In the face of increasingly unmoored experiences of images and objects, Fluxus artists pursued subject- and object-relations that mimicked but also sought thereby to undermine dimensions of the new cultural and social order. Fluxus works played with formal similarities between the easily exchangeable, transmittable postmodern image-sign and the "egalitarian" commodity, itself informed by the false egalitarianism of capital's supposedly frictionless, universal fungibility. Their works responded to the commodity fetish through invitations of touch and to the reign of spectacle through a hyper-expansive, notation-based semiotics that ensured the artwork in flux would never cohere or ossify as a discrete thing.

Fluxus artists were deeply aware of their transgressive cross-pollinations. The October 1962 announcement for a "Festival of Misfits" in London, which featured performances by Filliou, K pcke, Spoerri, Vautier, and Williams, explained, "We make music which is not Music, poems that are not Poetry, paintings that are not Painting, but music that may fit poetry, poetry that may fit paintings, paintings that may fit . . . something, something which gives us the chance to enjoy a happy, nonspecialized fantasy."⁴² This reconceptualization of the artist's relationship to

medium laid the ground for the creation of works capable of evading established categories of materiality while paradoxically upholding their status as art. Moving beyond rigid conceptions of medium and form in modernist art, Fluxus illuminated pathways for charting a new intermedia landscape at a time when phenomenologies of time and space were being profoundly transformed.⁴³

The rule of Fluxus's deviant, score-based works is paradoxical. An iterative work should become better understood the more realizations of it that exist, and yet its complete revelation can only be approached asymptotically, since no number of realizations will ever exhaust the possibilities of a topological form initiated as an unforecastable potential object. This points to the critical operation at the heart of Fluxus: as connections multiply and one action or object is rendered equivalent to or exchangeable with another, the artwork dissipates, devalues, perhaps almost disappears. Works are held in perpetual transformation, subjected to purposeless or object-less play, progressively *unmade* through time. In this way, Fluxus practices gathered around a series of losses and lettings-go: of form, medium, and the object, of disciplinary boundaries, conventional measures of value, hierarchies of production, and mainstream market and community networks. And yet this quality of loss was constitutive of works that, while evading established categories of materiality, ultimately upheld their status as art, and which have shown an impressive flexibility, longevity, and strength due to their basis in the logic of the event score.

I began with the example of Brecht's *Drip Music* because it vividly illustrates the problems and possibilities of form present in Fluxus work from the very start, problems and possibilities that remained present throughout the incredibly diverse array of the group's practices. In the wake of Fluxus, the artwork would no longer be a singular object made by a singular individual in a singular form out of singular materials of a singular medium. No. Against all of that, against every convention of aesthetic value that had accrued to the category of art since its separation from Church and State, against the seemingly inviolable categories of Painting and Sculpture, against the neo-Kantian ideal of modern art's medium specificity, the Fluxus artwork would be multiple, relational, transitive, and criminally ambiguous. Beyond *Drip Music's* drawn-out gestation period, 1959–1962, this work continued to be worked and unworked through various presentations in the form of texts, objects, and actions—a kind of artwork on slow-release that disclosed aspects of itself drip by drip, one droplet of actuality at a time. And like so many Fluxus works, it has continued to reveal itself in this way, generously, relentlessly, perhaps even a bit annoyingly, without end. In it, form is mobilized so that it may wend its way through different objects and authors. Nevertheless, form can be traced, even if in order to trace it, we must understand it differently.



Diagramming Form, from Graphic Notation to the Fluxus Event Score

NOTATIONAL ORIGINS OF THE EVENT SCORE

As we have seen with the example of *Drip Music (Drip Event)* (1959–1962) discussed in the previous chapter, the event scores of George Brecht are minimal, ambiguous texts. Typographically arranged by means of bullet points and parentheses, they read as performance instructions or experiments in prose. What began as thought pieces scribbled in his notebooks were, beginning in 1961, printed modestly on small pieces of paper and sent to friends through the mail. In this early period, the scores also appeared in literary journals, in the groundbreaking compendium of experimental notation *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, and were performed at proto-Fluxus concerts. Soon they were included in Fluxus publications and anthologized in *Water Yam* (1963), a boxed publication

co-designed by Brecht and Maciunas, which enclosed dozens of Brecht's score cards in an unfixed arrangement. Whether imperative or merely propositional, the scores involve the arrangement of objects and actions in spatial and temporal relationships. Above all, they are open and generative, embodying the potential for an immense range of actions to take place in their wake.

Brecht's thinking about how to make momentary gestures and encounters with objects into works of art evolved gradually over the latter half of the 1950s, but critical leaps were made during his participation in composer John Cage's experimental composition courses at the New School for Social Research in the summers of 1958 and 1959. By 1960, Brecht had written his first pieces explicitly called "events." His innovation with the event score format was to devise a practical material counterpart to his radical notion that the work of art could simply be a perceptual event identified and framed as such by the artist. The modest, intimate gestures articulated in Brecht's events were markedly different from traditionally staged theater, of course, but they were also distinct from the more spectacular genre of Happenings, which emerged in neo-avant-garde circles around the same moment. For the entirety of his career, Brecht continued to refine various dimensions of the event concept, devising ever new ways of articulating the idea through texts and arrangements of found objects. Meanwhile, the event score was adopted widely by Fluxus artists to organize performances and the production of temporally inflected or performative objects. If the event remains the central term in Brecht's individual practice, it was the event's mediation through the format of the printed score that made it into a tool that could be adopted by other artists. Brecht and his peers' turn to written notations had profound implications for the emergence and organization of Fluxus, if not significant repercussions as well for the conception and evolution of form in all sorts of neo-avant-garde artistic practices of the 1960s. More than simply an innovative aesthetic format, the adoption of scores in a primarily visual arts context entailed transformed relationships of authorship, production, and distribution among artists and their works. It is thus the origins of Fluxus artists' embrace of the score format that this chapter addresses.

It is widely accepted that Fluxus was, as Andreas Huyssen has put it, "born out of the spirit of music," with many of its founding artists deeply influenced by or directly studying under Cage.¹ Yet the almost singular focus on Cage as the key to understanding Fluxus's relationship to music has become a rhetorical shortcut, glossing over a complex dialogue about musical composition and notation among many actors that Fluxus artists witnessed close at hand. This chapter argues that in order to understand Fluxus event scores, we must observe closely Cage's participation as one composer among many in the development of experimental notation over the course of the 1950s. When Fluxus artists

began studying with Cage toward the end of that decade, notational innovations were ongoing, with related debates staged in Cage's New School classroom. I privilege these musical conversations over other ways we might approach Fluxus event scores—for example through the lens of concrete poetry—because these compelling little texts, some with graphic embellishments, were called not instructions or scripts or poems but *scores*. Their ontological structure was knowingly equated to the work of music as reflected in printed scores: iterative and allographic, rather than singular and autographic. The term “allographic,” which I elaborate in this chapter, refers to works meant to exist in multiple copies created and circulated apart from the artist's hand. The Fluxus score model capitalized on this and certain related qualities of musical notation—its mobility, relationality, and ambiguity—toward an alternative conception of artistic form that ultimately, as I argue in later chapters, informed thinking about the material and conceptual nature of Fluxus objects.

Despite the importance of music to the founding of Fluxus, the crossover and intermingling of ideas between members of the so-called New York Schools of music and painting, a dialogue that profoundly impacted the course of 1960s art, has been more closely studied in the field of musicology than art history.² Arguably, the effects of this intermedia exchange were clearer and more radical on the side of musical composition, with the proliferation of graphic notation appearing alongside composers' testimonies about the importance of painterly influences to their work. In turn, most musicological studies focus on the New York School composers' interactions with certain abstract expressionist painters as opposed to the younger generation of neo-avant-garde artists (including Fluxus) whose encounter with Cage's pedagogy coincided with a wholesale abandonment of modernist painting. On the side of art history, the fact that graphic notations have been little examined in studies of experimental music's influence on Fluxus, despite evidence of artists' keen interest in them, may be due to the art historian's limitations in the face of complex diagrams that seem to require technical training in music for their decipherment. This imbalance has begun to be rectified in the past ten years, although art-historical engagements with the history of experimental music have continued to center almost exclusively on Cage.³ Crossing disciplinary boundaries—and approaching this material in similar fashion to Fluxus artists, who in the main were not trained as professional musicians—I analyze experimental notations through an art-historical lens with the goal of showing how their graphic appearance, semiotic operations, and organization of composer-performer relations interface with the history of modernism in the visual arts. My aim is to show how certain dimensions of these experiments in graphic notation became reflected in the Fluxus event score format as it coalesced in 1962, the collective's founding year.

THE SPATIALIZATION OF NOTATION

So much space equals so much time.

—JOHN CAGE

At the time of Brecht's enrollment in Cage's summer 1958 course, Cage was in the midst of rethinking music from composition to performance. He was developing new compositions and theoretical writings in conversation with Morton Feldman, Earle Brown, and Christian Wolff, a group commonly known as the New York School of composers—although these figures' independent practices, nonhierarchical relations, and intense debates made them more of what composer and music critic Virgil Thomson once described as a “pressure group” rather than a school (which implies leadership by one individual).⁴ Crucial as well was the presence of David Tudor, a versatile pianist sympathetic to the composers' experiments, who approached the performance of their works with utter seriousness, commitment, and discipline.⁵ In varied ways over their respective careers, the New York School composers challenged Western music's basis in the composition of masterworks defined by an expressive, teleological, and thematically organized whole. In some cases, they even challenged the idea that a musical work was a discrete entity composed by an individual author to be performed in a dedicated concert hall with rigorous adherence to a fixed score as the work's master text. Already by 1952, Cage's *4'33"*, a work composed of three movements of silence, had embodied two philosophical ruptures: it redefined music as fully alive in the passage of clock time even without a musician's expressive action, and it subjected the final sonic content of the work to chance (inasmuch as the piece is constituted by incidental sounds that occur within its time frame). Of central concern to the present chapter, the New York School also subjected the conventions of musical notation to a series of radical transformations and breakdowns.

In order to fully appreciate the strategies of the New York School composers and what they offered to Fluxus artists, it is necessary to reconstruct some historical context for the field of Western music up to the moment of the 1950s and 1960s. Lydia Goehr has argued that around 1800, a highly regulated understanding of the musical work and its performance emerged that paralleled the modern notion of the artwork as a unique, original object produced by an individual creator. This modern “work-concept” marked a shift away from flexible, improvisational, collaborative, and contextual composition and performance practices that were previously widespread in Europe. By contrast, the nineteenth-century musical work became defined, to borrow Goehr's language, as:

a composer's unique, objectified expression, a public and permanently existing artifact made up of musical elements (typically tones, dynamics, rhythms, har-

monies, and timbres). A work is fixed with respect, at least, to the properties indicated in the score and it is repeatable in performances. Performances themselves are transitory sound events intended to present a work by complying as closely as possible with the given notational specifications.⁶

Accordingly, in European art music, the musical work's authentic replication through performance became governed by the notion of fidelity to the work, or *Werktreue*.

Aesthetically, the development of the work-concept was reinforced by the increasing prominence of notions of absolute music in the nineteenth century. Absolute or pure music, as musicologist Mark Evan Bonds has detailed, was understood to be "autonomous, self-contained, and wholly self-referential," in contrast to program music (championed by the likes of Richard Wagner), which derived its meaning from literal or implied narrative content.⁷ Bonds argues that, by the post-World War II period, absolute music had become so dominant in the Western sphere that it defined Western musical aesthetics altogether.⁸ The efficacy of the modern work-concept and its associated conception of aesthetic autonomy, which demonstrated remarkable parallels to modernist conceptions of form and autonomy in the visual arts, held remarkable sway over the conception of musical composition inherited by Cage's generation.

At the level of media and technology, the rise of absolute music went hand in hand with the primacy of the score in defining the musical work. Commensurately, by the moment of Cage's coming of age as a composer at mid-century, the system of inscription for metrical staff notation had become fine-tuned so as to convey precisely the contours of a fully fleshed-out and fixed musical object. As Richard Taruskin has put it, "The notion of the work, and of fidelity to it, has narrowed over the course of the twentieth century, squeezing the spiritual or metaphysical dimension out of the work-concept until work-fidelity did finally become coextensive with text-fidelity."⁹ Notwithstanding the various complications wrought by electronic music and mechanical reproduction in the twentieth century, the nineteenth-century complex of musical ideas that used the medium of the score to assert metaphysical identity across a work's composition, performance, reception, and transmission remained a prevailing force in determining the ontological parameters of Western art music throughout the twentieth century. Arguably, it is still a major controlling force in the field of music today.

In its fully developed modern form, Western musical notation, which coincided with an increased investment in *Werktreue* and the rise of absolute music, could also have the effect of repressing interpretive ambiguities such that by the twentieth century, as musicologist Peter Gradenwitz has described, "a page in a Mahler or Schoenberg score contained as many dynamic and agogic marks as

notes proper.”¹⁰ In effect, the newly detailed score served as the musical work’s legislator, a kind of law that all performances ought strictly to obey. Similarly, language adopted by the fields of musicology and analytic philosophy to describe the relationship between a score and its performance tended to reflect this ideology. For example, in a widely debated section of philosopher Nelson Goodman’s 1968 book *Languages of Art* devoted to musical notation, the author argues for the necessity of score-“compliance” for a performance of a work to count as a true realization. Goodman writes, “A score must define a work, marking off the performances that belong to the work from those that do not.”¹¹ In his account, the performance “complies” with the score or “belongs to” it; the performance is, in a sense, the score’s possession.¹²

Indeed, by the 1950s, traditional Western musical notation had become a highly coded written language that was “composed,” “written,” and/or “read.” Of staff notation, Cage complained, “*Sounds are no longer just sounds, but are letters: A B C D E F G.*”¹³ Later, he characterized the score as a letter written from composer to performer.¹⁴ Cage’s dissatisfaction with notation as a mode of musical communication and transmission evoked its language-bound, devotional origins in medieval Europe as a memory aid for liturgical chants, predating absolute music and the work-concept by many centuries. As musicologist Thomas Forrest Kelly has shown in his history of the invention and development of musical scores in the Western tradition, “the basic unit of music-writing is not the note but the syllable.”¹⁵ If medieval notation sought to standardize the eternal truth of the word of God in liturgical form, Cage seemed to detect a similar metaphysical (if secular) link between composer and performer with modern musical notation. It was this codified regime of notation, which ultimately became married to regulative conceptions of the musical work in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to which Cage and his cohort sought alternatives.

For Cage in particular, the modern musical work-concept and its attendant culture of notation had become increasingly incompatible with experimental practices that hoped to incorporate an expanded spectrum of sound via electronics and other unconventional instruments, such as Cage’s prepared pianos, which introduced screws, bolts, and rubber slabs into the body of the instrument. Cage anticipated the problem in an early manifesto-like lecture, “The Future of Music: Credo,” delivered at the Seattle Arts Society in 1937, in which he presciently stated, “The present methods of writing music, principally those which employ harmony and its reference to particular steps in the field of sound, will be inadequate for the composer, who will be faced with the entire field of sound.”¹⁶ Indeed, the availability of magnetic tape following World War II gave composers greater control over all aspects of the composition and performance process at the same time that it recast music simply as “the organization of sound.”¹⁷ Given such a broad definition, some hailed new audio recording technologies as liberating the musical work

from its dependence on the score, revivifying debates about the ontology of the musical work and the necessity for its representation in live performance.¹⁸ Now, a solo piece could be performed, recorded, and edited under the composer's direct supervision, thus securing and protecting its identity through time. Richard Maxfield, a student of Cage who taught electronic composition at the New School, was one to defend the new possibilities for artistic control:

Working directly with sound with his new sensitive electronic tools, [the composer] has no further need of the universal but obsolete symbols on score paper (do-it-yourself performance recipes suitable for voluminous publication). By this means, his terminal art product is no longer just plan but definitive realization in recorded form which can be trotted out like a piece of sculpture to show anybody. It thus becomes far easier to present his work publicly or privately not having to depend on the patronizing publisher and the dutiful performer.¹⁹

Cage, seeking not to be replaced by an ensemble of machines, saw the dystopian limits of a fully administered electronic music and pursued the other line toward indeterminacy, probing the limits of form and compositional intentionality by loosening the relations of identity between composer, score, and performance so that music could more properly "imitate nature in her manner of operation."²⁰ In a process of theoretical and practice-based deconstruction, Cage proceeded to break down musical composition and its basis in sound into their component parts. In the text "Experimental Music" of 1957, he defined musical composition as a combination of separately determined parameters of structure, form, material, and method. Sound, he reasoned, could be measured according to five more or less acoustic (rather than musical) parameters: frequency (pitch), duration, amplitude (volume), timbre, and morphology.²¹ The most fundamental element, common to both sound and silence, would no longer be the property of a single tone or note; it would instead be the bare fact of duration. His *4'33"* had been a succinct demonstration of this.

The next problem to be addressed was how to notate this new music. As mentioned earlier, conventional notation's symbolic alphabet, organized around the articulation of discrete pitches, was inadequate for representing the entire physical reality of sound, as New York School experiments working with magnetic tape, such as Cage's *Williams Mix* (1952) and Feldman's *Intersection for magnetic tape* (1953), had shown. In contrast to magnetic tape's physicalization of time as a spatial continuum, Cage likened conventional notation's "discrete steps" of notes to an awkward walk across stepping-stones. "This cautious stepping is not characteristic of the possibility of magnetic tape," he explained, "which is revealing to us that musical action or existence can occur at any point or along any line or curve or what have you in total sound-space."²²

Cage's commentary offers one example of the ways in which new music in the 1950s engendered a rethinking of fundamental aspects of musical notation's graphic representation of space and time. From the perspective of art history, the moment of 1958–1962 is commonly seen as marking a radical temporalization of the arts, giving rise to Happenings, Fluxus, kinetic art, and other forms of performative and interactive practices.²³ But while time and its various avatars—theatricality, process, kineticism, destruction, and decay—launched an irreversible crisis in the visual arts, we might also venture that a contemporaneous crisis emerged in Western art music through an incursion of imaginative and inventive forms of spatialization. As previously discussed, the postwar availability of magnetic audiotape allowed for the measurement of musical time in inches rather than the metrical bars of staff notation. In the face of electronic and non-musical sounds or noise, conventional notation became an outmoded sign-system repressive of the very qualities of sound and vicissitudes of performance experience that many composers found most interesting; thus electronic and aleatoric compositions began to be notated in highly visual, newly invented graphic systems. Meanwhile, performers and audience members were subjected to alternative arrangements in the performance space, ensuring that there would not be any one ideal point of reception, and composers increasingly specified through visual diagrams unique stage settings of customized acoustic and electrical instruments. During Cage's *Theater Piece No. 1*, the historic first Happening that took place at Black Mountain College in 1952, the audience was arranged in a full circle around a central axis while imagery was projected onto the ceiling, texts recited by figures positioned atop ladders, and performers circled in and out of the crowd. In 1958, Karlheinz Stockhausen and others lectured on the spatialization of sound at the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (IFNM) in Darmstadt, an important gathering site for composers and performers of new music. In his lecture "Music in Space," Stockhausen declared, "more and more . . . all musical ideas are becoming increasingly spatial."²⁴

So too did literature at this moment acquire newfound awareness of the spatial in dialogue with developments in music, enabled in part by the contiguous orbits of poets and musicians associated with Black Mountain College. The poet Charles Olson, one of the performers to speak from a ladder-top in *Theater Piece No. 1*, published in 1950 the manifesto-like tract "Projective Verse," which described the poem as a field or "high-energy construct" in which "all the syllables and all the lines must be managed in their relations to each other."²⁵ Olson's imperative that poetry ought to be read aloud and thus written to facilitate its oration called for renewed attention to its graphic layout. Free-form use of punctuation marks, breaks, and negative space signaled the work's performative nature.

The inventive graphic notations explored by the New York School composers were in many ways a like-minded experiment in the spatialization of sound on the

page. In contrast with traditional notation, the particular freedom of experimental graphic notation, as Feldman described, was that “sounds no longer had an inherent symbolic shape.”²⁶ In turn, the New York School’s shift from writing scores to drawing them coincided with an alteration in the way the score functioned in relation to the musical work. For many of these composers, the score was transformed from a conventional system of symbols that pointed to predictable, attendant sonic material into an engine for inventing the very new. No longer a quasi-administrative tool of registration and recording, the score became a means of creative *projection*, as the title of Feldman’s first graph piece composed in 1950, *Projection 1*, acknowledged. Pieces of music like *Projection 1*, initially composed in a sketch-like fashion, were less descriptive and increasingly propositional, less singular and authoritative works and more akin to multifaceted structures, different features of which would be revealed with every performance. Graphic notation’s free delineation was meant to subvert the traditional placement of notes on the staff, the notational equivalent of an ordered, linear perspective or a horizon line—a second-order, symbolically coded mode of representation. Graphic notation was the most appropriate alternative form of notation for the experimental music Cage and his cohort sought, this music defined as “an act the outcome of which is unknown” to both performer and composer.²⁷

Facilitating the New York School’s thinking in this direction was regular dialogue with the visual artists who frequented the Cedar Tavern bar and the Eighth Street Artists Club, where Cage and Feldman gave lectures.²⁸ Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt, and Mark Rothko were all in this orbit. The composers were drawn to this artistic milieu because it provided support for their work when it was lacking from the music community. According to Cage, “I had early seen that musicians were the people who didn’t like me. But the painters did. The people who came to the concerts which I organized were very rarely musicians—either performing or composing. The audience was made up of people interested in painting and sculpture.”²⁹ It is well recorded how Feldman’s work was nourished at this time by close contact with Rothko, Pollock, and Philip Guston, while Cage found important interlocutors in Rauschenberg and Johns.

Western music theory has long deployed spatial metaphors to address compositional, formal, and harmonic structures, and the power of normative conceptions of the work and its attendant metaphors of compliance or fidelity was ascendant during the twentieth century, a time of great disciplinary consolidation of modern classical music. In this context, the reimagination of music in spatial terms among experimental composers deliberately aimed to subvert the normative power of musical notation and its attendant disciplines. Experimental amplifications of the visual qualities of musical notations, executed in ways that often did not conform to traditional conceptions of virtuosity for performers, made

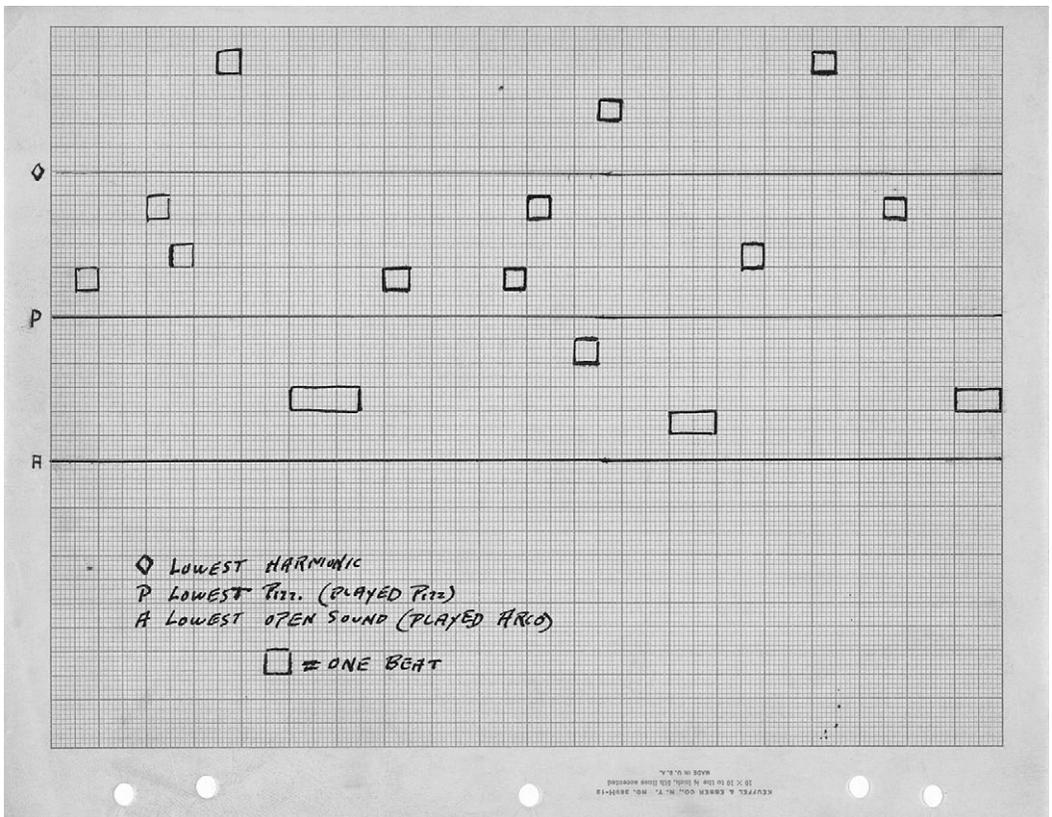
musical forms newly available to artists who were not trained in or dedicated to the reading or writing of music, such as those involved in Fluxus and other inter-media tendencies of the early 1960s. (Of the post-Cagean generation of artists I discuss, Nam June Paik, Benjamin Patterson, Mieko Shiomi, and La Monte Young did have advanced musical training, though all were disaffected with its norms in various ways.) These artists took the New York School composers' emancipations both literally and philosophically. In the very first pages of Brecht's notebook from Cage's summer 1958 course, in fact, we can see that music was defined for the students as "events in sound-space."³⁰ According to Dick Higgins, Cage merely said of notation, "So much space equals so much time."³¹ Thus we can begin to understand the radical nature of the redefinition of music from which Cage's course, and the first stirrings of Fluxus, began.

THE NEW YORK SCHOOL AND THE EMERGENCE OF GRAPHIC NOTATION

The emergence of graphic notation can be traced to one particularly momentous exchange that occurred in December 1950. The setting was Cage's top-floor loft at 326 Monroe Street near the lower East River, sparsely furnished with one couch and a grand piano, a carpet of straw matting on which guests could sit, and nothing on the walls—all the better to draw attention to the enormous plate-glass windows with their views onto the surrounding urban landscape.³² Cage tells this story:

Morton Feldman [who also lived in the building] went into the room with the piano and I stayed at my desk which was in the bedroom with David Tudor. Shortly, Morton Feldman came back with his first piece of graph music where on graph paper he simply put numbers and indicated high, middle, and low, how many high notes, how many middle notes, how many low notes, and nothing else. There were squares of the graph that he left empty so there were no notes there at all. After he showed it to me and to David Tudor, David Tudor went to the piano and played it. It was a great experience.³³

What Feldman composed that day became *Projection 1*, the first of a series of scores that appropriated gridded paper as the plane of notation, now become a visual composition populated not with individual sound-points but swaths of unspecified pitch and dynamics ranges (fig. 15). The first modern notation of its kind, precise pitch choices were left to the discretion of the performer so long as they maintained, in sum, the basic proportional relations set forth in the score. The work's very title, *Projection 1*, suggested there were various interpretive possibilities for its performance, recognizing that any performance would simply be



one “projection” of many possibilities for the structurally coherent score. A daring provocation in its time, boxes like the ones Feldman composed with on that day have by now been incorporated into standards of metrical notation as the very symbol of indeterminacy: drawn around segments of notation, they indicate sections open to improvisation or the performer’s choice.³⁴

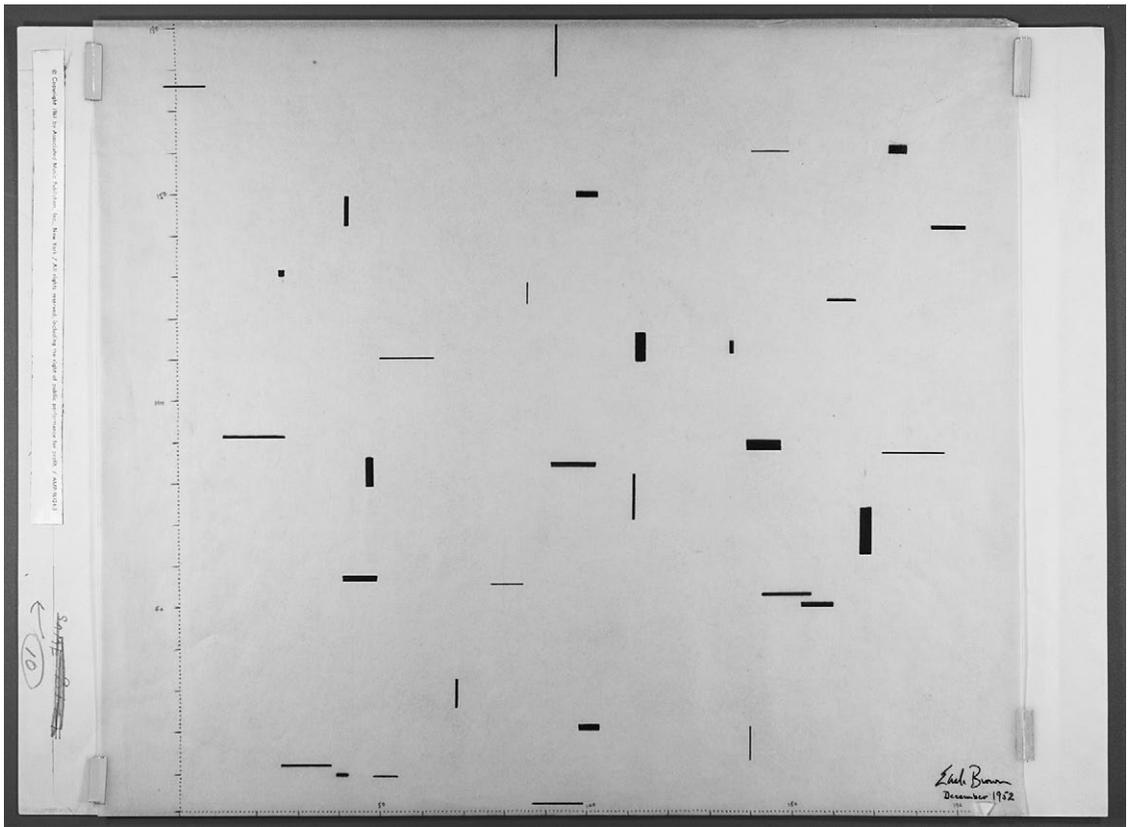
After Feldman’s initial, seemingly spontaneous gesture in Cage’s loft, he continued to hone his thinking about the graph pieces over time. The similarly notated works *Projections 1–5* and *Intersections 1–4* appeared between 1950 and 1953, and then Feldman abandoned the technique until the years 1958–1967, when he composed another burst of graph pieces. His process entailed a kind of schematic mapping of the musical work that he described in remarkably visual and plastic terms. Feldman called his graph pieces “rhythmic shapes” or “time shapes,” while Cage described them as “form conceived in terms of a continuity of various weights.”³⁵ Feldman turned to the language of “touch, frequency, intensity, density, ratio, color,” claiming “it’s just the spatial relationship and the density of the sounds that matters.”³⁶ Complaining that staff notation was “too one-dimensional . . . like painting a picture where at some place there is always a horizon,” he worked by mounting pages to the wall in order to contemplate his composition visually and holistically, as if he were composing an all-over painting on canvas.³⁷ In Feldman’s

Fig 15. Morton Feldman, untitled graph score related to *Projections* series, c. 1950. David Tudor papers, 1884–1998 (bulk 1940–1996), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (980039). Copyright © 1961 by C. F. Peters Corporation. Used by permission.

notebook c. 1950–1952 there appears a most basic assertion of this idea: a drawn square whose bottom and left sides are labeled as vertical and horizontal axes of timbre (or tone quality) over time.³⁸ His stated intention with the graphs, as he later explained, was to “erase virtuosity—to do away with everything but a direct action in terms of the sound itself.”³⁹ With this emphasis on immediacy, Feldman provided only brief explanations for these graph pieces, erroneously presuming that matters of interpretation would be implicit in the score—thus charging the work with a dimension of ambiguity that was later seized on by Fluxus artists.

Important sources for Feldman’s turn to graphic notation were the thinking of mentor composers Stefan Wolpe, with whom Feldman studied in the 1940s, and Edgard Varèse, whom Feldman met through Wolpe. Not coincidentally, the term “projection” was significant within Varèse’s musical philosophy. For him, it referred to the physical way sound transmits through a space from its source. As musicologist Brett Boutwell has explained, it also contained the idea that musical material is “projected compositionally within the vertical and horizontal space of a score.”⁴⁰ Varèse lectured at The Club in November 1950—with Feldman, Cage, and Wolpe in attendance—and in his talk made an appeal for the invention of new forms of notation to serve the needs of current musical innovations. Wolpe, who in Europe had contact with the Bauhaus through Paul Klee and Oskar Schlemmer, also developed spatial analogies for thinking about structure in musical composition. He spoke and wrote about music existing in a multidimensional “constellatory space” requiring a “multi-listening ear” comparable to three-dimensional visual space as traversed by the eye.⁴¹ In a talk given at Black Mountain College in 1952, he explained, “Pitches behave like dots in a vast sphere of different pitch possibilities.”⁴² Following this line of thought, Feldman continued to think about the importance of what he called “notational look” over the rest of his career.⁴³

Earle Brown quickly advanced upon Feldman’s breakthrough in a series of works written between 1952 and 1954, beginning with *October 1952* and *November 1952* (“Synergy”). These first two scores lacked both clef signs and bar lines, making them scalable to any extremity of time or pitch. In the performance note for *November 1952*, in which staff lines have been multiplied into a grand weft of horizontals, Brown explains, “Either space (vertical or horizontal) may expand, contract, or remain as it seems to be here.”⁴⁴ What came next, *December 1952*—a work that ten years later would take pride of place in a fund-raising concert for *An Anthology of Chance Operations*—pushed the idea of scalability to its very limit (fig. 16). According to Brown’s prefatory note, “The composition may be performed in any direction from any point in the defined space for any length of time and may be performed from any of the four rotational positions in any sequence.”⁴⁵ The score is a scattering of horizontal and vertical lines of varying thicknesses, the placement, direction, length, and width of which were determined with reference to random number tables. Gone are all conventional



signifiers that would associate the notation with the performance of music. Staff lines, bar lines, and notes have either disappeared or magnetically consolidated so that each mark or “element,” as Brown called them, carries the significant weight of multiple dimensions of sound at once (pitch, duration, and volume), all made relative within a unified structure readable from any direction. Brown called this score a “sonic image.” The piece is “not composed,” he explained; rather, “suggestions of relationships are all that is given.”⁴⁶ Brown later attributed his approach in these pieces to his training in the Schillinger technique, which utilizes graphs in the composition process.⁴⁷

Faced with the radically unconventional nature of graphic scores like *December 1952*, which consolidated all aspects of the visual language of metrical notation into a matrix of irregularly placed rectilinear forms, critics grasping for precedents turned to the history not of music but of abstract modern art, from Paul Klee to Piet Mondrian to Joan Miró.⁴⁸ Brown, however, preferred to see his method as Constructivist, connecting his work to a tradition of abstraction linked to art-historical notions of concretism or the concrete.⁴⁹ Indeed, that *December 1952* can be read in any direction indicates a morphological and theoretical similarity to El Lissitzky’s prototypical Constructivist artwork, the Proun, rotatable for viewing in any orientation. The Proun, which took its name from the Russian acronym for “project for the affirmation of the new,” offered nothing less than a revised

Fig 16. Earle Brown, *December 1952*, 1952. Original hand-drawn score. Courtesy of Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel, Earle Brown Collection and Earle Brown Music Foundation.

perceptual order to replace the illusionism and pictorialism of easel painting. For Lissitzky, the fact that the abstract Suprematist compositions of his mentor Kazimir Malevich were meant to be displayed on a fixed axis problematically implied the existence of a horizon line, even if it was not depicted.⁵⁰ By contrast, the Proun modeled a Constructivist vision that would take into account the extensions of real space: “It has become a construction and like a house,” proclaimed Lissitzky, “you have to walk round it, to look at it from above, to study it from beneath.”⁵¹ Similarly, the notation for Brown’s *December 1952* eschewed staff notation’s rectilinear, narrativizing order of time. It could be entered into from any direction and moved through visually, emphasizing that the eyes, in their scanning, were likewise proceeding through appreciable dimensional space.

Cage’s approach to graphic notation was markedly more tentative, given his suspicion of improvisation and notational ambiguity. Seeking ways of unhinging the composition process from the articulation of an ideal musical form and turning structure over to chance, Cage organized parcels of composed sonic material on a graph by means of what James Pritchett has called “a two-dimensional representation of the gamut.”⁵² This method was an outgrowth of Cage’s gamut technique begun in the late 1940s after the serial method of Anton Webern and Arnold Schoenberg, in which precomposed musical passages were organized according to an independently determined structure.⁵³ Remarkable to an art historian’s eye, Cage incorporated into his process at this point the readymade matrix of the grid. Unlike Feldman, however, Cage first turned to the grid merely as an alternative organizational device rather than as a visible feature of his finished notations. For example, Cage composed *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Chamber Orchestra* (1950–1951) by populating a sixteen-by-sixteen-square grid with composed musical content and then ordering the units by charting a route through the cells as if it were a game board. Cage’s earliest observable use of the grid was in *Chess Pieces* (c. 1944), an ink and gouache painting of musical notation in alternating black and white squares that give it the appearance of a chessboard. Although not yet functioning as a chance-based structuring device, the idea was implied. Describing his newly devised composition method to composer Pierre Boulez, Cage excitedly wrote, “A new idea entered which is this: to arrange the aggregates not in a gamut (linearly) but rather in a chart formation. . . . I then made moves on this chart of a ‘thematic nature’ but, as you may easily see, with an ‘athematic’ result.”⁵⁴ This gamut-chart or grid method was a step toward evading the composer’s imposition of a predetermined developmental structure to which all sounds must conform. It also facilitated perception of the score as a broadly expansive, two-dimensional field.

What Cage sought—to write music without a thematic through-line, music that would engage a vast field of possible sounds—he ultimately achieved by way of a literal transformation of composition’s graphic space, from a continuously

developed line into an extensible grid that stretched out in all directions. Cage's next major work, *Music of Changes* (1951), was also composed by means of a grid, but this time his path through it was determined in an aleatoric way by numbering the spaces and deciding their order with reference to the *I Ching*, an ancient Chinese divination system. It is often recounted how Cage was introduced to the *I Ching* by Christian Wolff, who gave him a copy of the volume released by his publisher father that included an introduction by Carl Jung.⁵⁵ Recent scholarship by David Cline argues, however, that it was in fact Feldman's grid pieces that emboldened Cage to turn to the *I Ching*'s grid-like hexagrams as a composition tool as well as to compose highly illustrational scores like *Water Music* (1952) and *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1957–1958).⁵⁶ Perhaps more importantly, Cage's embrace of the *I Ching* recognized that notation, a form of mediation between the composer and his work, already subjected the musical work to a certain amount of risk. Whereas that risk had come to be systematically repressed in Western music as a discipline, particularly through the codification of notation, Cage's method sought to make risk and differentiation a formative part of the work's structuring. By pairing aleatoric methods with a series of charts, Cage's compositions returned staff notation to its fundamental origin in the grid. Moreover, his spatialization of compositional material across a gridded space to be reordered by way of chance effectively abolished the possibility for thematic harmonic development and a preconceived musical narrative imposed by the composer. It also dispensed with serialism's axiomatic compositional methods. In Cage's 1950–1951 works, the employment of grids as a compositional technique indicated the conceptual transformation of the space of composition from a linear continuity into a unitary spatial field, even if that space was not yet visible in the final notations.

By 1952, however, Cage would go further with the grid, making the crucial leap of adopting the grid's abscissa and ordinates as the very matrix of notation, and thereby introducing indeterminacy and ambiguity into the scene of performance. In *Music for Carillon No. 1*, Cage made note-points on quarter-inch quadrille paper by inking through an improvised template of constellations of holes made at the intersections of random folds in a sheet of paper (fig. 17). Cage's use of the grid in this case was a radical simplification of notation to its most basic function: the designation of tones in time. The left-to-right axis would be a single continuity of time; top-to-bottom would be a single continuity of pitch, similar to Brown's *November 1952* and the two-dimensional time-timbre axis sketched in Feldman's notebook. The score page became a kind of map that figuratively plotted out sound as a unified field of sonic possibility, a visual analogy to Cage's revised conception of music. As Pritchett writes of this innovation:

All of the points in the space were equally possible; pitch and time were treated as the continua that they truly are. In this respect, the new method was an

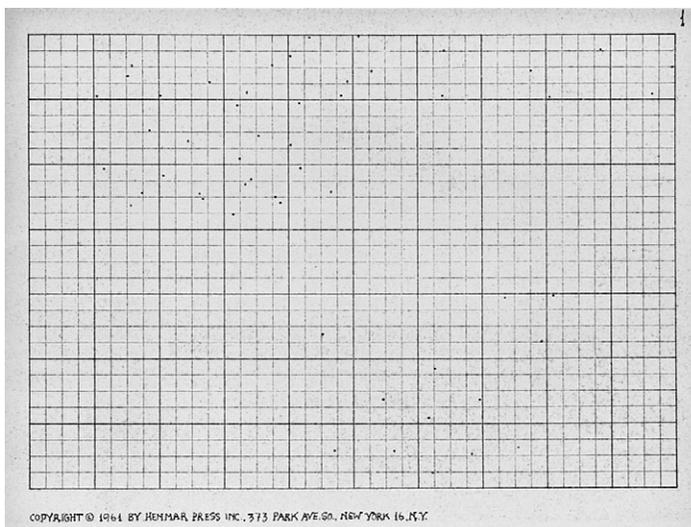


Fig 17. John Cage, *Music for Carillon, No. 1* (excerpt), 1952. Copyright © 1961 by Henmar Press, Inc. Used by permission of C. F. Peters Corporation.

improvement over the chart technique, which had only dealt with sounds that sprang from Cage’s imagination, and not directly from the totality of acoustic possibilities.⁵⁷

In a deliberate segregation of musical structure and material in the composition process, Cage began with a mere scattering of points, representing a constellation of raw sound material only secondarily organized into relations via a common grid. A more expedient version of that technique, referred to by Pritchett as Cage’s “point-drawing system,” was used for Cage’s eighty-four-part series *Music for Piano* (1952–1956). Here, readymade arrays of notes were obtained by marking a random number of imperfections on the drafting paper directly, onto which staff lines—a partial grid—were subsequently superimposed, producing notations resembling the traditional metrical form.

The notation methods used in *Music for Carillon* remained Cage’s most extreme, a paradoxical alignment of drawing with a desubjectification of the composition process and reduction of notation, and thus the musical work, to its most basic constitutive elements. For Cage, a true concretism of sound began from the distillation of notation to a succession of individuated note-points. Of these cursory techniques of marking notes, Cage explained (echoing Feldman), “I wanted to have a very rapid manner of writing a piece of music. Painters, for example, work slowly with oil and rapidly with watercolors.”⁵⁸ Here, Cage employed the graphic language of metrical notation—points and lines—without regard to its regular function as part of a symbolic language of musical communication. Two important transformations resulted: first, a shift in compositional method from the writing of music to its *drawing*; and second, the musical material, represented by a schematic rendering of points, was laid down first and only afterward brought

into common relation by the matrix of the grid, resulting in the *chance* finding of form. Sonic form here is merely a byproduct of the graphic materials of composition, an aftereffect of a primarily visual creative process.

Composers would soon begin to invite the performer to partake in the chance ordering of the work by means of rearrangeable pages or sections, as in Earle Brown's *Twenty-Five Pages* (1953), Boulez's *Third Piano Sonata* (1955–1957/63), and Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI* (1956). The implications of this general move toward “open form” in music were decidedly political, as Boulez explained:

Why compose works that have to be re-created every time they are performed? Because definitive, once-and-for-all developments seem no longer appropriate to musical thought as it is today, or to the actual state that we have reached in the evolution of musical technique, which is increasingly concerned with the investigation of a relative world, a permanent “discovering” rather like the state of “permanent revolution.”⁵⁹

Graphic notation's basis in the grid brought to the field of music the same irrevocable transformation or “permanent revolution” as the grid's emergence had done to mark the inauguration of modernist abstraction—a transformation performed over and over through the art of Cubism, De Stijl, Russian Constructivism, and beyond. The grid has stood, according to Rosalind Krauss's landmark account, as a “paradigm or model for the antidevelopmental, the antinarrative, the antihistorical.”⁶⁰ “The grid announces, among other things, modern art's will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse.”⁶¹ Certainly these were among the goals of Cage's music, if not Feldman's and Brown's as well. The grid is, however, a deeply paradoxical emblem of modernism. At the same time that the grid concretely maps the surface of its support or is coextensive with it, the grid's logic represses that materiality in that it stands for an abstract, transcendent order of rationality and even, as Krauss notes, a certain spirituality. For this reason, by 1960, the crossbars of the modernist grid had become for a young generation of visual artists an aesthetic and ideological prison. In response, they began to populate the grid's lattice with anti-transcendent content (Krauss points us to Andy Warhol and Jasper Johns) or willfully exceed its boundaries (as in the early work of Allan Kaprow). The New York School composers' slightly earlier engagement with the grid should also be brought into this fold, as it too imagined a fundamentally postmodern application of the grid along with an alternative possibility for its meaning. If the grid was culpable for “walling the visual arts into a realm of exclusive visuality,” for a medium like music, beholden in performance to a linear temporal unfolding, it provided multiple escape routes.⁶² In the charted-out compositions of Feldman, Brown, and Cage, the grid was effectively *put to use*, serving to de-subjectify the artist in relation to his work and granting the grid a newfound

capacity as autonomous production machine. The grid was not a mythic signifier of Being, Mind, Spirit, or of the artist's originality; it was employed rather as an operational playing field. It was not a repressor of change but became its very agent, showing that the grid is not merely "what art looks like when it turns its back on nature," but that it can be deployed to reveal the chaotic indeterminacy of life.⁶³ The notational grid was absolutely opposed to the rhetoric of modern painters like Mondrian and Malevich, for whom the grid was "a staircase to the Universal." If the New York School's musical grids dallied in abstraction, it was only as a radically anti-transcendental means of delivering the listener back to the concretism of sonic materiality in all its dimensions.

THE SCORE AS DRAWING AND DIAGRAM

If I have labored over the entry of the grid into musical notation practices of the 1950s, it is because this entry marks the first moment of a crucial turn in music composition practice that began to interest visual artists and is therefore of concern to the art historian. The grid initiated a transformation of the act of musical composition from the detailed transcription of an ideal, fully formed musical work using a highly developed symbolic language into the free mapping of sonic relations across the composition page, something more akin to the activity of drawing. In other words, the score would not be written; it would be drawn, like a picture, returning to one of the earliest meanings of the word "score": "a stroke, mark; a line drawn as a boundary."⁶⁴ This transformation incurred a radical decoupling of the score's iconic appearance from its significative function. Text and image were separated into elaborate graphic constellations on the one hand and lengthy performance instructions on the other—a crucial step in making notation available as a tool to visual artists. With the return of scoring to its affiliation with drawing, the score was returned, as in its premodern developments, to its role as a way station for a musical work that would never be selfsame in performance. The innovation of graphic notation lay not merely in the invention of new compositional tools for describing sound but coincided with a conceptual shift in which the transmission of the musical work was no longer invested in the secure capturing of a complete work in a universally understood notation. Instead, there was a daring acceptance on the part of composers and performers of almost any graphic materials whatsoever as a score that could potentially be interpreted and performed.

The drawn score or score-drawing was backed by the belief that it offered a more direct or concrete relationship to sound. Feldman linked his embrace of graphic notation to the milieu of gesture painting: "The new painting made me desirous of a sound world more direct, more immediate, more physical than anything that had existed heretofore."⁶⁵ His graph scores were drawn out of the desire

“not to ‘compose,’ but to project sounds into time, free from a compositional rhetoric that had no place here.”⁶⁶ Freed as they were from the symbolic alphabet of metrical notation, the scores “are really not ‘compositions’ at all. One might call them time canvases in which I more or less prime the canvas with an overall hue of the music.”⁶⁷ Brown, speaking on his work leading up to the pure graphism of *December 1952*, recalled, “I wrote in a graphic, line-drawing style, very rapidly. . . . This was an attempt at correlating my own conception with an extremely rapid way of ‘composing,’ which was, I have said, almost like improvising myself—in other words, realizing a graphic drawing in my own way.”⁶⁸ These composers believed that to *draw* a score, as opposed to writing it out using an inherited notational language, would counteract its mediating role, in turn leading to a more “direct” performance experience in which the performer-interpreter would have more input as to the work’s final outcome. While Feldman ultimately turned away from composing graph works, he considered the continued notational experiments of Cage to be of utmost significance: “I would characterize Cage’s Contribution, in capital C, as being in notation.”⁶⁹

In later decades, graphic notation was increasingly recognized by the art world as a compelling genre of drawing, for example when framed pages of Cage’s score for *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1957–1958, discussed below) were included in the Museum of Modern Art’s 1976 exhibition *Drawing Now: 1955–1975* alongside works by Johns, Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenburg, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt, Hanne Darboven, and Bruce Nauman.⁷⁰ Within advanced music circles, however, graphic notation was immediately controversial. In 1951, Feldman sent some of his graph pieces to Boulez, suggesting a comparison to the abstract compositions of Piet Mondrian. Boulez’s reaction was overwhelmingly negative. Unable to countenance imprecise designations of pitch, he saw the notations as a simplistic, dangerous regression to obsolete scoring methods. He complained to Cage, “They let themselves go dangerously to the *seduction of graphism alone*. Now, we are musicians and not painters, and pictures are not made to be performed.”⁷¹ While testimonies in defense of graphic notation by Cage and Feldman were published as early as 1952, its legitimacy did not become the focus of heated debate at the IFNM until 1959.⁷² The most vociferous critic was Italian composer Luigi Nono, who blasted graphic notation along with indeterminacy as effectuating a “spiritual suicide” on the part of the composer, resulting in failed musical works passed off as successful by virtuoso performers (Nono likely had Tudor in mind).⁷³ Stockhausen’s response was more measured. In his illustrated lecture “Musik und Grafik,” which addressed among other graphic works Cage’s *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* and Sylvano Bussotti’s *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor* (1959), Stockhausen acknowledged certain dangers of fetishization and obscurantism presented by graphic notations: they are purchased by “musical dilettantes” to be hung on the walls of art galleries, and musicians and composers cannot agree

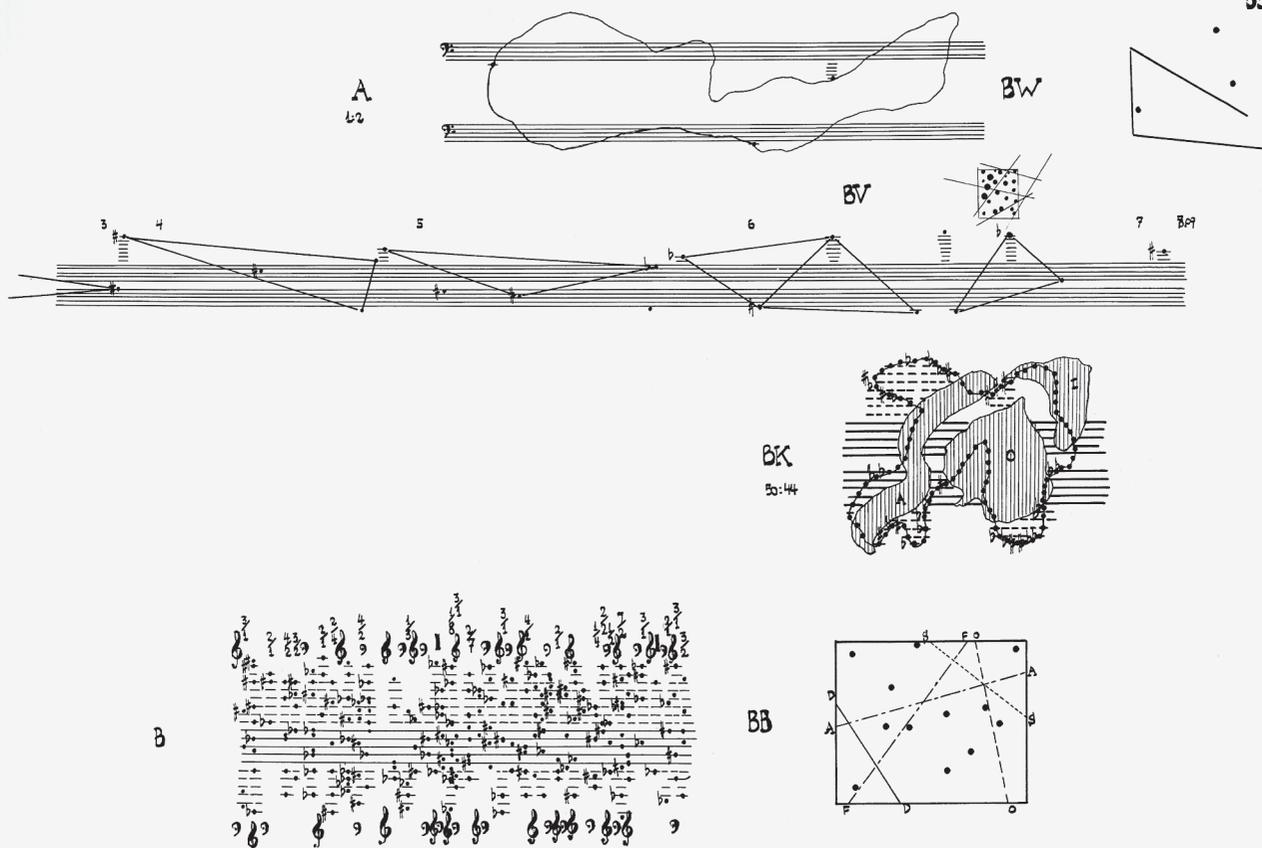


Fig 18. John Cage, *Concert for Piano and Orchestra, Solo for Piano* (excerpt), 1957–1958, p. 53. Copyright © 1960 by Henmar Press, Inc. Used by permission of C. F. Peters Corporation.

on what they mean.⁷⁴ Still, perhaps out of loyalty to Cage, he defended the value of graphic notation as a significant development in experimental composition practice.

What critics from even the most avant-garde corners of the music world could not foresee or appreciate is just how galvanizing graphic notation would be for a young generation of visual artists experimenting with performance on the fringes of the New York art world, especially those studying with and influenced by Cage. Concurrently with Cage's twenty-fifth-anniversary concert held on May 15, 1958, at Town Hall, New York, organized by Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and filmmaker Emile de Antonio, pages from Cage's *Seven Haiku* (1952), *Water Music* (1952, which includes the instruction "Pour water from one receptacle to another"), and *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* were displayed on the second floor of the Stable Gallery above an exhibition of paintings by the second-generation abstract expressionist Mario Garcia. Cage's concert and exhibition were attended by current and future students including Kaprow, who had already been attending Cage's course, and Brecht, who was about to enroll that summer.

The *Solo for Piano* component of Cage's *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* exhibited at the Stable Gallery was alone a monumental feat of graphic invention (fig. 18). In it, eighty-four different forms of invented notation are parceled out over sixty-three pages, with the instruction that any amount of the score,

from none to all, may be performed in any order, and that the pages may be read horizontally or vertically.⁷⁵ Cage subjects the basic vocabulary of recognizable musical graphemes—stemmed notes, staff lines, accidentals, clefs, and dynamics—to distortion, dismantling, reorganization, and repurposing. The five lines of the staff are mapped over with organic strata, loose strings, encircling boundaries, and perspectival schematizations. Notes lose their finials and stems; they float in space, measurelessly. Cage provides instructions for how to interpret the various notational segments by way of a prefatory catalogue of indexed performance notes ranging from the minutely detailed to the extremely vague. For example, the instruction “Play in any way that is suggested by the drawing” accompanies segment “AR,” in which a treble and bass clef are the armature for a concatenation of perspectively rendered hexahedrons devoid of any individually articulated points whatsoever. *Solo for Piano* marked Cage’s understanding of graphic notation as a process of drawing that, in tandem with chance processes, provided a further means of severing the composer’s control over the performed work’s final, audible form.

Art critic Dore Ashton reviewed Cage’s exhibition in the *New York Times*, noting that the composer “works in India ink with fine pens” and comparing his scoring practice to a kind of calligraphy:

They [the notations] are set down in a complex system of numbers, notes, letters, and geometrical formations, and each page has a calligraphic beauty quite apart from its function as a musical composition . . . In all of the manuscripts, there is a delicate sense of design at work that transcends the purely technical matter of setting down music.⁷⁶

Later on in the same review, Ashton again uses the word “calligraphic” to describe the painted abstractions of Garcia. If to interpret Cage’s scores as visually compelling drawings constitutes a disciplinary transgression, it was precisely his transfiguration of musical notation from a symbolic language of specialized disciplinary communication to an iconic, pictorial one that prepared his work to be accepted more readily by visual artists. Ashton’s characterization of the work was in fact not far off; Cage and Feldman were known to discuss in detail what kinds of pens they used to draw their scores.⁷⁷ And, according to Cage (however tongue-in-cheek), “Bob [Rauschenberg] said at the time that he hoped I wouldn’t become an artist, because I could be a threat.”⁷⁸ Not long after, in early 1961, Brecht sketched out an event score for inclusion in a gallery exhibition, taking care to note that the entirely text-based composition should be written in India ink and framed.⁷⁹

Cage’s score-drawings demonstrated that the drastic reduction of sound to its most basic, inherent qualities, freed from the armature of tonal structure and the teleology of musical narrative, would have to be notated with the most basic

elements of drawing. The graphic equivalent of an individual sound would be a point; extended through time, point became line. The correspondence between sound and the graphic mark had already been theorized for the visual arts in Wassily Kandinsky's 1926 treatise *Point and Line to Plane*, a text Cage may have come to know through Galka Scheyer, a patron and dealer of Kandinsky whom he befriended in his early years in Los Angeles.⁸⁰ An English translation was published in 1947 by Hilla von Rebay on behalf of the Guggenheim Foundation's early Museum of Non-Objective Painting, and its intended audience was the abstract painters of Pollock's generation.

Kandinsky's study of pictorial elements begins with an examination of the point, described throughout the text as a "beat" or "sound." The point finds its origin in the act of writing, notably as a signifier of inaudibility or silence: "In the flow of speech, the point symbolizes interruption, non-existence."⁸¹ But then, "torn out of its customary state"—released, that is, from the symbolic regime of language—the point "prepares to leap out of one world into another."⁸² Considered alone, the point can be seen as an "independent being," ushering forth onto the space of the page a realm of pictorial communication and mark-making. "This," declares Kandinsky, "is the world of painting," with the point as its "proto-element."⁸³ The point for Kandinsky is the basic element not only of painting but of *all* art forms, including dance, architecture, and music, and he provides diagrammatic translations representing each discipline. Bodies, buildings, and metrical notations are transformed into scatterings of points. The tips of a dancer's fingers and toes become points; the ornamental peaks of Gothic architecture and a Chinese pagoda become points.⁸⁴ In several pictorialized versions of passages from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, variously sized points accompanied by linear arabesques indicate rhythmic and dynamic emphases. Later scores by Cage, including *Aria* (1958) and *Water Walk* (1959), verged fully into drawing through remarkably similar ideogrammatic notations. In the vocal piece *Aria*, fragments of lyric text are accompanied by drawn lines approximating pitch progressions, recalling neumes, the shorthand-like graphemes introduced in the ninth century to record relative pitch patterns as they were chanted by liturgical choirs of the Roman Catholic Church. *Water Walk* was a theatricalized adaptation for Italian television of Cage's earlier work *Water Music* (1952), whose score was designed to be displayed in a poster format during performances. The later version incorporated drawn renderings of the piano and some of the props to be used.

Given all this, we can begin to see Cage's famous three movements of silence in 4'33" in a new light. Of the three formats in which 4'33" appeared—staff notation, proportional notation, and text ("tacet, tacet, tacet")—it was the proportionally notated version that was for Cage the work's primary representation, rather than the text version most widely known today. It was the proportional notation that

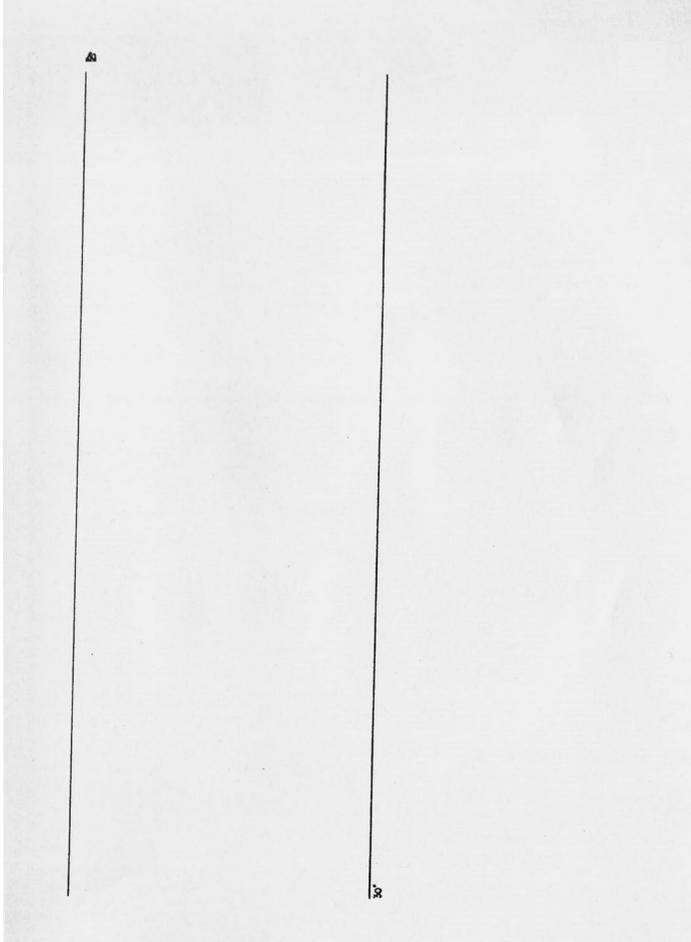


Fig 19. John Cage, *4'33''*
(original version in
proportional notation)
(excerpt), 1952/1953.
Copyright © 1960 by
Henmar Press, Inc. Used
by permission of C. F.
Peters Corporation.

Cage gifted to its dedicatee, Irwin Kremen, and it was the version Cage agreed to have reproduced in the avant-garde music journal *Source* in 1967 (although, problematically, the score did not appear to scale) (fig. 19). A graphic notation of the most reduced sort, each second of time is represented by $\frac{1}{8}$ inch of blank page-space. Four minutes and thirty-three seconds become approximately six mostly empty pages, divided into movements by the imposition of drawn vertical lines. With this version we can see most clearly how *4'33''* responded to the *White Paintings* of Rauschenberg. Cage had been contemplating the possibility of a “silent piece” as early as 1947, but it wasn’t until 1951 when he saw Rauschenberg’s series of abutting panels painted entirely white that he summoned the courage to go forward with the idea. As is often recounted, Cage recalled seeing the paintings’ surfaces not as empty blanks (“*a canvas is never empty*,” he said) but as “airports for shadows and for dust,” “mirrors of the air.”⁸⁵ The graphic version of *4'33''*, a work that attempted to show how “silence” is never truly silent, indicated Cage’s understanding that the paintings’ effect of an expansive, inclusive visuality was predicated on the articulation of marks drawn virtually by the minute gaps found between each adjoining canvas, situated completely beyond the typical plane of painterly incident. For Cage, these negative spaces could be read as visually positive articulations framing the phenomenally charged spaces in between. Even

with no notes present in Cage's graphic iteration, the musical work was effectively *drawn* into existence by means of the framing line.

Curator and historian of drawing Catherine de Zegher has written on the relation of drawing to the articulation of form, explaining that the drawn line is not necessarily in the first instance a registration of cognition, communication, or even draughtsmanly craft as art history might have us believe. "The arrangement of lines to determine form—*delineation*—is much older than its companion, *perspective*. While perspective deals with the placement of objects in space, delineation deals primarily with analogy: the representation of objects as such, not as they appear in space."⁸⁶ The embrace of delineation's mode of signification by means of direct, part-by-part analogy to the depicted object was precisely how graphic notation was mobilized as a new kind of transitive musical form in the twentieth century. Both Kandinsky and Cage understood this. Delineation produces form in its most basic sense: an individual point becomes a discrete sound, a wavering line becomes a melody. As such, proportional graphic notations such as Feldman's *Projections*, Brown's *December 1952*, and Cage's *Music for Carillon* marked a limit of simplicity in experimental notation. The conflation of space and time—the "so much space equals so much time" with which Cage's course began—coupled with a push toward concretism brought the score back to its most basic function of demarcating a set of tones in relation to one another against (a rather flexible) pitch- and time-space.

It could be said that graphic notation simply realized, in the most literal of ways, what the score-form had long been understood to be: a laying out of relations between tones. For Cage it was in fact the score's basic identity as a set of relations fixed within a given notation that defined it as a musical "time-object."⁸⁷ For Theodor Adorno, who lectured at Darmstadt in 1961, such relations were the very definition of music:

For [the bare tone] to become music, it must have recourse to those configurations which it cannot discover within itself. . . . Music consists not just of notes, but of the relations between them and . . . the one cannot exist without the other. . . . There are no notes without relations, no relations without notes.⁸⁸

It is precisely due to the musical work's basis in a set of fixed relations that its identity is maintained through an infinite number of potential realizations. Yet if notation in the twentieth century had been defined by ever-greater precision and control in regard to structures and materials, in works like Feldman's *Projections* and Brown's *December 1952*, structure had become radically flexible, manipulable, and multifaceted, its sonic possibilities more capacious. The new musical work was imagined, as Stockhausen described, as "an individual, self-contained world like a crystal, which, when one turns it, is always different, but always the same.

It should not matter whether the music is played from the beginning, middle, or end, so long as it goes full circle.”⁸⁹ To sketch the work as a visibly diagrammatic set of relations made this understanding of music absolutely emphatic. Graphic notation announced that the musical work, like the new notation, should be understood as an abstract, mobile, scalable structure able to exist in differing sonic materializations. The score exfoliates into infinite realizations that are analogically, isomorphically connected in their allegiance to a shared structure—a structure through which, in turn, an astonishing variety of sonic materials are brought into newfound relation.

Graphic notation’s transformation of the score into a schematic constellation of relations places it firmly under the semiotic category of the diagram and diagrammatic depiction—what philosopher Sybille Krämer has referred to as a “cultural technique” of visualization that brings together the communicative functions of image and text on a shared plane through the “graphism of the line.”⁹⁰ Diagrams encompass maps, flow charts, architectural plans, and other representational forms that rely on schematic drawing in order to visualize complex spatial configurations or time-based and vectored processes of movement or transformation. Musical notations, including the experimental graphic scores that I have been discussing, are diagrams of this kind as well. Such structures, while abstract, maintain an intimate connection to reality as either the registration of an existing object or the projection of a future one.

In recent years, historians of twentieth-century art have begun to unearth a variant trajectory of abstraction based in diagrammatic or diagram-based forms and practices, marking the outlines of a theoretical model that encompasses the diagram in both its projective (utopian) and legislative (dystopian) aspects.⁹¹ Following the lead of Molly Nesbit’s pioneering scholarship on Duchamp’s “language of industry,” David Joselit has shown how the diagrammatic had been for Dada artists a key visual tactic on par with montage and the readymade, observable first in the mechanomorphs of Francis Picabia and Marius de Zayas published in the pages of the avant-garde journal *291* in 1915. Against the “implosive” obfuscations of Cubist form, Dada’s diagrams provided a promiscuous and expansive “model of polymorphous connectivity between discrete elements” that emphasized the “pure relationality *between things*” over and against modern industrial applications of the diagram to the regulation and administration of thought.⁹² In works like Marcel Duchamp’s *Large Glass* (1915–1923), the diagram’s ability to project form in varied modalities was literalized through recourse to an actual transparency of ground, in recognition of the diagram’s capacity for projecting realities-to-come. As George Baker has argued, such Dadaist manipulations of transparency were a mocking critique of modernist versions of an aesthetics of transparency, in which sculptural rationalism was thought to be achieved by rendering form literally penetrable to vision.⁹³ Dada, by contrast,

mobilized transparency as “an embrace of the ephemeral in art—a work that would not last, that would incorporate chance and the temporal—that would, in fact, constantly change or even disappear.”⁹⁴ It was also a gesture toward the capacious ensnarement of reality into the category of art, which would of course become central to the neo-dada project of Fluxus. Such practices belong to a vein of underappreciated twentieth-century diagram aesthetics that came to fruition in the postwar period as an alternative means of organizing artistic form apart from visually consistent morphologies, privileging instead conceptual, structural, relational, and/or operational modes of aesthetic organization. We might even credit such practices with enabling the aesthetic shift from modernism to postmodern or contemporary art at all.

To understand better how the diagram functions, we can turn to Danish cultural theorist and semiotician Frederik Stjernfelt’s rigorous theorization of the diagram’s ontology, function, and reception, which has defined the contours of an entire field of diagrammatology.⁹⁵ Like many theorists of the diagram, Stjernfelt locates the origins of diagram theory in the work of Charles Saunders Peirce, who categorized the diagram as an iconic sign in that it is representational by means of similarity to its depicted object. In short, it is a pictorial representation of the simplified structure of a thing. The diagram is thus an exceptional kind of icon because it represents its object as a purely schematic set of relations. Peirce writes, “The pure Diagram is designed to represent and to render intelligible, the Form of Relation merely.”⁹⁶ Building on Peirce, Stjernfelt explains that the diagram is thus an “operational icon,” for it participates in a logic of deduction that allows for the icon to be operated on, employed as a tool or technique of thought. In Peirce’s words:

Deduction consists in constructing an icon or diagram the relations of whose parts shall present a complete analogy with those of the parts of the object of reasoning, of experimenting upon this image in the imagination, and of observing the result so as to discover unnoticed and hidden relations among the parts.⁹⁷

As an operational icon, the diagram allows for the conceptual manipulation of form. It is, as Stjernfelt describes, “a formal machine for *Gedankenexperimente* [thought experiments].”⁹⁸ To this end, the diagram “may refer to existent, future, past, imaginary, fantasy, or any other objects.”⁹⁹ It can be descriptive or projective, a map or a plan. It entails a process of abstraction that unfixes form’s relation to a particular place or time.

The musical work represented by graphic notation is precisely this kind of diagram, one that is topological in its openness to transformation and distortion through space and time but nevertheless maintains a consistent basic structure.

The common identity of two performances of an individual score is based not on a similarity of visual or aural appearance but on a formal correspondence of operation, of a common diagram, performed. In fact, it is only by reimagining form as diagrammatic and topological—like a crystal, to recall Stockhausen’s evocative description—that the musical work in the wake of graphic notation can be said to remain a coherent work or “time-object” at all. This is the basic contour of the score model that was taken up and forwarded by Fluxus.

INDETERMINACY VERSUS AMBIGUITY

In contrast to the mere implication of operativity offered by diagrammatic work found earlier within the history of modern art, such as Dada’s diagrams, the graphic notations of the New York School were designed explicitly to be performed. In this, a crucial transformation took place. No longer a purely visual motif, the diagram was brought to bear on reality. It was workable, enacted, performed. Yet this activation of the diagram’s projective implications introduced a problem related to one last characteristic of the diagram I have not addressed, and it is where the diagram model begins to break down in the face of the art in question. Stjernfelt explains that the diagram does in fact retain a relationship to symbolic thought in that it must bear a consistent and rational correspondence to its object. Indeed, a ruling presumption in semiotic studies of diagrams is that a diagram’s relations—within the individual diagram itself but also between the diagram and its signifier—must be consistent and rational. For, despite their often technical-scientific appearance, diagrams court danger in their need to be interpreted. As Krämer reminds us, “diagrams do not interpret themselves.”¹⁰⁰ This hazardous quality gives rise to what Joselit has described as the diagram’s problematic yet productive “semiotic mobility or agency.”¹⁰¹ Accordingly, while the graphic notations of Feldman, Brown, and Cage were initiated out of the desire for a more direct relationship to the material of sound by attempting to show their music pictorially rather than narrate it with an inherited symbolic language, they in fact amplified notation’s inherent ambiguity, which had been conventionally repressed as a negative risk. Writing in 1952, as the new wave of musical graphism began to be publicly disseminated, Virgil Thomson ventured an explanation as to why abstraction had come so late to the practice of writing music:

The collage, the splatter, the blot, the accidental texture have been exploited by painters for forty years. From Duchamp and Picasso to the latest American abstractionists the history is continuous. Music itself accepts a high part of hazard in execution; and perhaps it is from this fact that composers have not exploited its possibilities much in actual scoring.¹⁰²

Musicologist Daniel Charles has provided a useful explanation of the two-fold manner in which the new notation achieved its chance outcomes: “We have the blossoming of an ‘action’ notation specifying the gesture to be made rather than the result to be obtained, and an ‘experimental’ technique of sign indeterminacy, where the score did not specify how the polyphony was to be generated but simply described its appearance.”¹⁰³ In the first case, as in Cage’s works made in consultation with the *I Ching*, a performative action or compositional process may be clearly delineated but its sonic result is indeterminate. In the second case, composers’ efforts to reimagine the iconic depiction of a sound gave rise to an indeterminacy of interpretation, what Charles refers to as the “enigma of the sign.”¹⁰⁴ In either case, in indeterminate or ambiguous compositions, the identity of the performed work in relation to its score-diagram is stretched to its limit. The nature of these works is paradoxical. They become better known the more they are performed, and yet our knowledge of them is forever incomplete, as no number of performances will ever deplete the potential of a variously interpretable diagrammatic form. If, as Goehr has described, “The dependence between work and performance is *virtual* in the sense that . . . it remains a continuing practical possibility,” the indeterminate or ambiguous work embraces this quality as constitutive of the very form of a work that can never be consolidated—a form that, through its varied realizations, actually disaggregates over time.¹⁰⁵

These two chance composition methods—the former aligned with Cage’s concept of indeterminacy and the latter related to an embrace of the hazards of semiotic ambiguity—marked a fissure within the New York School’s experiments regarding the contrasting forces of discipline and liberation in their work. George Brecht’s notebooks from the late 1950s indicate that this ongoing debate unfolded in Cage’s classroom, with the composer testing out arguments in relation to which Brecht and his peers formulated their own responses and positions. Opposite Cage’s commitment to mechanically derived and rigorously applied chance procedures, Earle Brown embraced ambiguity—both conceptual and material—as a valid means toward a new kind of mobile or open form work. Examples of such include his “physically mobile” *Twenty-Five Pages* (1953), whose pages can be played in varying orders, and *December 1952*, in which the ambiguous or “conceptually mobile” notation can be interpreted in infinite, unforeseen ways.¹⁰⁶

An unrealized aspect of *December 1952* would in fact have activated both possibilities, for Brown notes that the abstract graphic represented only one potential arrangement derived from an imagined, much more complex, three-dimensional kinetic score. He envisioned a transparent box sitting atop the piano, inside of which a system of gears would set horizontal and vertical elements in constant motion in front of the performer’s eyes, to be responded to extemporaneously as they passed through his or her field of vision. As Brown explains, “I had a real idea that there would be a possibility of the performer playing very spontaneously,

but still very closely connected to the physical movement of these objects in this three-dimensional motorized box.”¹⁰⁷ He admits to “not being able to get motors and not really being all that interested in constructing it,” although notably some of these sketches were later realized by Brown’s former student, the Fluxus artist Joe Jones, who himself became known for building mechanized musical contraptions that perform autonomously.¹⁰⁸ For a related work inspired by Buckminster Fuller, also never realized, Brown imagined a geodesic sphere afloat on water, bearing a notation on each of its faces. As the performer played, he or she would blow on the sphere to reveal different sections of the score. These ideas finally came to fruition in Brown’s *Calder Piece* (1966), conceived in 1963 and first performed in 1967, which integrates a custom floor-bound Alexander Calder sculpture that is played like a percussion instrument. (Brown often related his notion of open form to the work of Calder, with whom he met as early as 1953.) Brown’s vision of a physically mobile score led him to imagine what was in fact no longer a score in the traditional sense of that term, but rather an object—what might be better described by the art historian as a performative or kinetic sculpture—that would be related to *as if* it were a score. Notation in this case simply became a hermeneutic operation defined by the adoption of any material whatsoever as a score to be read and interpreted.¹⁰⁹

December 1952 pointed toward a score model in which compositional structure could be appropriated from anywhere as an alternative to the composer’s own organization of musical content, marking the beginning of an important reconceptualization of the score away from any predetermined format, text, or graphic. The score turns from a text or object into a conscientious *activity* in which the performative act of interpretation envelops the entire artistic process. A score model was hereby initiated, a mode of musical practice that could approach potentially any object as a notation to be performed.¹¹⁰ Freed from the musical establishment’s strict ideology of score compliance, this model formed the basis of an expansive, multidisciplinary culture of notation that connected numerous neo-avant-garde practices of the early 1960s, from the event scores of Brecht, Yoko Ono, La Monte Young, and other Fluxus-affiliated artists to Simone Forti’s *Dance Constructions*, Robert Morris’s “Blank Forms,” Walter De Maria’s *Boxes for Meaningless Work*, Warhol’s *Dance Diagram* paintings, and beyond.¹¹¹

This was not, however, a letting go of all limits, for Brown was adamant that throughout these transformations the musical work should retain its integrity as an apprehensible entity or “object”:

Ambiguity in the service of *expanding* the conceptual and real potential of the work must not lead to the loss of the work as a recognizable, and to a certain extent, “objective” entity. The “object” must reappear transformed by the process imposed upon it as a “subject.”¹¹²

In Brown's expanded notion of the work of art, it becomes a "quasi-organism" that evolves through "multiple formal identities."¹³ He went so far as to compare such transformations to our experience of individual selfhood: "We recognize people regardless of what they are doing or saying or how they are dressed if their basic *identity* has been established as a constant but flexible function of being alive."¹⁴

By contrast, although Cage's *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, among other works, had utilized ambiguity as a means of achieving indeterminate performance outcomes, Cage notoriously came to reject ambiguous notation, which he saw as opening a space for the performer's ego and habits to direct the work toward clichéd forms of self-expression. If one were not following the "dictates" of the ego, Cage thought, one was still liable to fall in line with the "dictates" of the subconscious.¹⁵ His disappointing experiences with uncooperative and disrespectful performers only served to reinforce these beliefs.¹⁶ Cage viewed graphic works like Brown's *December 1952* as negative corollaries to his own practice, which pursued rigorously mechanical, anti-subjective rules of composition and performance in order to free both composer and performer from consciously directing the final execution of the work (although it is debatable to what degree this is possible). As Brown recalled:

When I first began working in this area of graphic scores, which were then to be realized spontaneously and improvisationally, the reaction of John Cage to these scores in particular was highly dubious, to say the least. Cage, at this time in 1952, was composing things by chance, by literally flipping coins, and putting things into continuities using this technique which was completely apart from his choice or taste or from anyone's choice or taste, apart from the taste of the performer. In these scores of Cage, once the coins were flipped, the resulting continuity was played that way always, even according to a stopwatch, which is a high degree of control and eliminates almost totally the possibility of a performer being flexible, or of multiple interpretations of the performance itself.¹⁷

While Cage had been mostly pleased with the results of his early experiments with the grid, in that they produced outcomes he could not predict, he continued to be dissatisfied that his chance methods had little effect on performers' relationship to the finished composition. In the final instance, his chart technique continued to produce conventional musical scores written in staff notation that the performer would read and perform in a typical fashion. Cage saw the relationship between composer and performer posited by the score as a dehumanizing one, in which the performer and his or her instrument were made to conform to the dictates of an ideal work wholly indifferent to the complexities of individual performance situations. At the same time, Cage also wanted to avoid the quasi-rehearsed proclivities that marked free improvisation.

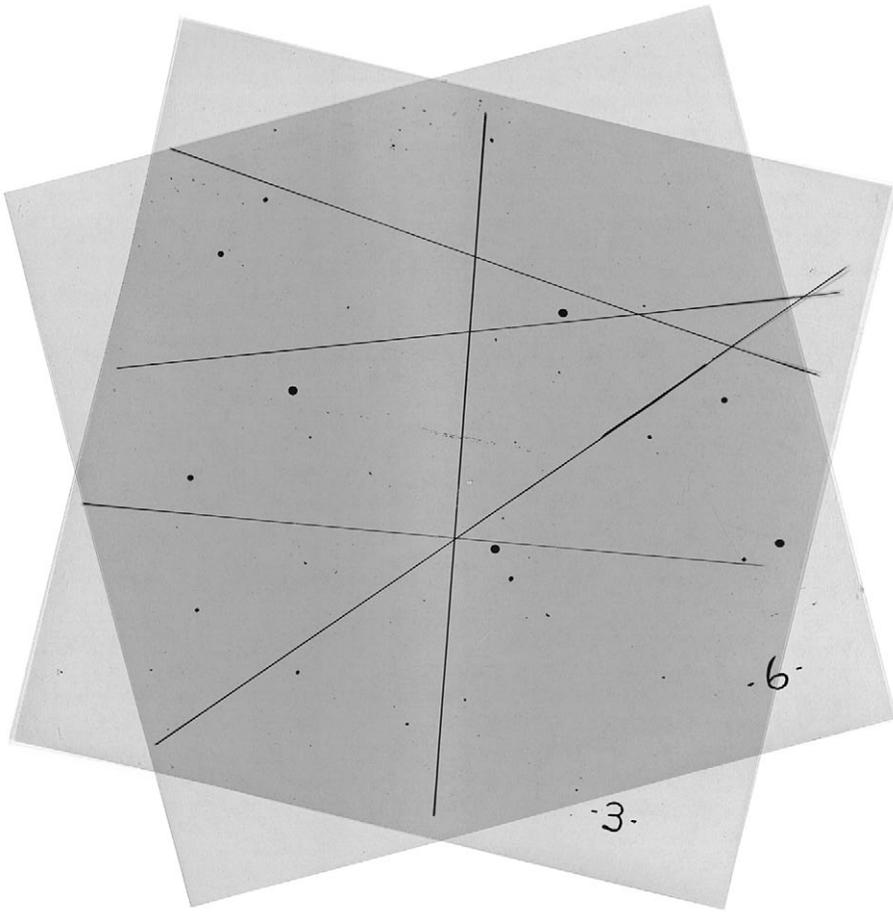


Fig 20. John Cage, *Variations I* (detail), 1958. Copyright © 1960 by Henmar Press, Inc. Used by permission of C. F. Peters Corporation.

And so Cage's version of experimental music ultimately came to reject predetermined arrangements of both musical and graphic form altogether. Beginning with the composition of *Variations I* in January 1958, he began to break down the graphic elements of notation further than previous compositions had dared (fig. 20). To ensure the work's variability from performance to performance and to suppress the determining ideations of the composer, lines and dots were freed from their fixed relation on the page. Additionally, *Variations I* is for "any number of performers; any kind and number of instruments."¹¹⁸ Dedicated to David Tudor, Cage's most trusted performer, the score consists of six transparent squares, one printed with points of multiple sizes indicating multiplicities of sound. The other five are variously crisscrossed with lines representing five qualities of sound: frequency, overtone structure, amplitude, duration, and "earliest occurrence [*sic*] within a decided upon time."¹¹⁹ After selecting transparencies and placing them in an overlapping arrangement, the interpreter draws perpendicular lines between the newly joined points and lines, the measure of each distance indicating a coordinate of a sound. Repeating these arrangements and measurements, one can build up a composition of playable tones; thus *Variations I* is more of a tool for creating a score than a fixed score itself.

It was for Cage a further deconstruction and remobilization of conventional notation's graphic elements, first seen in segments "BB" and "BV" in the *Solo for Piano* segment of *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, in which the five lines of the staff have been dismantled from their parallel orientation and instead overlap randomly (see fig. 18).¹²⁰ In *Variations I*, sonic matter and its representation in two-dimensional graphic form are radically separate, the latter mobilized as a set of perilously unmoored abstract relations to be translated into any number of sound-producing objects or gestures. Rejecting fixity in both the musical and visual fields, *Variations I* thus recalled the avant-garde art-historical lineage of transparency previously discussed, in particular those Dada experiments in which a literal transparency of ground realized the diagram's abilities to transpose form across varied materials and adapt to changing contexts.

Cage would go even further than this, enacting a veritable shattering of pre-conceived musical form. The second and most radical of the *Variations* series (there would eventually be eight), *Variations II* (February–March 1961), operates similarly to *Variations I* except that every single point and line is assigned to an individual transparency sheet. Cage presents as a score the basic graphemes of notation radically *unformed*, freed from any fixed relation whatsoever, in homage to Erik Satie's observation that "music notation is nothing but points and lines."¹²¹ Even for Cage, this drastic method could no longer be called a score. Writing to music critic Peter Yates in May 1959, he explained:

I no longer write scores, but only parts which can be performed in any combination. . . . For a year now there are no conventional musical notations in the materials I provide, simply points on transparent sheets, lines on others, free superimpositions of these, and suggestions as to their interpretations.¹²²

No relations, no form, no object, no fixed work. And yet, as Heinrich Wölfflin established as a foundational principle of art's history, "Every work of art has form, is an organism. Its most essential feature is the character of inevitability—that nothing could be changed or moved from its place, but that all must be as it is."¹²³ In modern times, it has conventionally been no different in the realm of music. For both fields, the tools of the artist have been set to the task of fixing form, that enduring set of relations which constitute the work's unique and consistent identity. As a result, critics and audiences have been faced with two options in addressing Cage's most extreme gestures toward indeterminacy: either to reject them (thus protecting existing aesthetic categories), or to labor over the redefinition of music/art so as to legitimate them and bring them back into the fold (a taming of indeterminacy's most radical implications).

In Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art*, the author raises the example of an early point-and-line notation by Cage as a negative example that does not even

constitute a score for its unaccountability to the principle of compliance, which presumes that a score's main function is to serve as "the authoritative identification of a work from performance to performance."¹²⁴ The problematic segment in question, notation "BB" drawn from *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, "furnishes no means of identifying a work from performance to performance or even of a character from mark to mark."¹²⁵ As noted earlier, Goodman's language imagines the relationship of artist to work as a relationship of possession or ownership, in which compliant performances "belong to" a musical work. Daniel Charles has described well what is at stake here:

It is [for Goodman] a matter of using the score to protect the work against the risk of loss of identity—or increased entropy—that lurks in acquiescence to the ephemeral, denounced as conveying an absolutely fatal fragility.¹²⁶

Of note, the roots of Goodman's strict, nominalist approach to notation can be found in Peirce's definitions of "type" and "token," in which a type is defined as a class of which the corresponding token is a member.¹²⁷ Goodman leans on this formulation as a basis for understanding the relationship between a scored work and its iterations.¹²⁸ While it may seem obvious that one should reject Goodman's hardline definition of scores and his disavowal of Cage's indeterminate works, I dwell on his account because it nevertheless provides some helpful terms. Elsewhere in *Languages of Art*, Goodman describes how painting and sculpture are understood to be "autographic" arts (meaning, literally, written with one's own hand), in that the work bears a direct, physical relation to the artist. By contrast, the "allographic" arts (meaning written differently or otherwise) are those whose works are distributed or realized by means of score, script, or text, which necessarily exist in multiple copies or manifestations.¹²⁹

Cage's approach to the musical work's inherent allographism tested the score's ontological multiplicity to the furthest extent imaginable. His *Variations* series represents the full efflorescence of his strivings toward a seemingly chaotic variability akin to nature, based in a score-performance relation of difference rather than identity, which *ensures* that the work will be different each time it is performed. In response to the discourses of music and art at mid-century, Cage devised a work that critically enacts and reenacts the dispossession of the very possibility of form—if we understand form to be the abiding, outwardly perceptible aesthetic characteristics that uniquely identify a work. As we have seen with the example of Brecht's *Drip Music*, the challenge Fluxus brought to the field of art was similarly owed to artists' exacerbating the ways in which allographic production throws the identity of the artwork into question. Additionally problematic, however, was Fluxus's introduction of an allographic model of production and dissemination to a visual arts market and value system centered

on reified, readily commodifiable paintings and sculptures and thus invested in an autographic notion of the work.

Ultimately, among the New York School it was Cage with his *Variations* series who explored to the furthest extent the experiment of abolishing fixed form in the work of music. In the final instance, his peers backed away from the precarious edge of the work's loss through its splintering into limitless variations. Indeterminacy, mobile form, and graphic notation would disappear from the work of most of these innovators by 1962, marking a return to musical order. From the vantage point of 1965, Feldman explained:

Up to now the various elements of music (rhythm, pitch, dynamics, etc.) were only recognizable in terms of their formal relationship to each other. As controls are given up, one finds that these elements lose their initial, inherent identity. But it is just because of this identity that these elements can be unified within the composition. Without this identity there can be no unification. It follows then, that an indeterminate music can lead only to catastrophe. This catastrophe we allowed to take place.¹³⁰

Neither would Fluxus artists fully embrace the anarchic, anti-formal effects of indeterminacy as Cage did. On August 7, 1958, Brecht prepared for the last meeting of Cage's summer course that year the outlines of a comparative analysis of Brown's *Four Systems* (1954) and Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI* (1956), two works that Cage would analyze in his infamous "Indeterminacy" lecture given at Darmstadt only a couple weeks later, on September 8. The timing of Brecht's notes shows that Cage's classroom was the site of a two-way pedagogical exchange that should make us consider the ways in which Cage's own practice and philosophies of indeterminacy were transformed through encounters with his students, many of whom were only a decade younger. Regarding the similarity of Brecht's notes to Cage's lecture, musicologist Rebecca Y. Kim has proposed (and I agree) that either Cage borrowed ideas from Brecht or, knowing about the Darmstadt invitation, requested Brecht's assistance in preparing his remarks.¹³¹

Here is Brecht's telling analysis of the structure and operation of Brown's *Four Systems*, a graphic score of rectilinear elements much like *December 1952*:

Since the structure being interpreted . . . retains its relationships . . . the situation is concerned with relativity as well as with probability. That is, the same structure retaining the relationships between its parts is viewed in different frames of reference.¹³²

That is, Brecht describes *Four Systems* in the language of diagrammatic form. He reiterates the idea later on in the passage:

Though the reference frame is rotated the fragments or sound-events remain in somewhat fixed relationship to each other, so that the macrostructure (the piece as a whole) maintains certain relationships through each performer viewing the same score-structure from a different vantage point.¹³³

Brecht locates this phenomenon in Cage's work, too. "This is analogous somewhat to your page no. 59 (Stable exhibition)," he writes, as if speaking directly to Cage. Brecht refers to a segment of notation from Cage's *Solo for Piano* that is a jumbled lattice of overlapping staff lines peppered with notes, a spatial deformation of staff notation just preceding its explosion into the severed points and lines of *Variations I* and *Variations II*.

The next part of Brecht's analysis concerns the level of each work's "situation participation," or the extent to which either piece "partakes of the situation in which it occurs, as opposed to arising from some pre-existent structure."¹³⁴ Stockhausen's work, he observes, would seem to be more situation-specific, given that the order of individual sound fragments is not preordained, and yet "the *ambiguity* in interpretation of each fragment in the B[rown] piece compensates for the relative rigidity of structure within each system."¹³⁵ "Dictionaries call indeterminate and ambiguous synonyms," Brecht ponders, "I wonder if they really are."¹³⁶ And so he goes to their roots, noting:

ambiguity—ambigire, to waver, be taken in more than one way.

indeterminate—determinire, to limit.¹³⁷

With this series of close observations, Brecht isolates a crucial difference between the two approaches to chance represented by Stockhausen's and Cage's rule-bound, algorithmic processes of achieving indeterminacy, on the one hand, and Brown's open-ended abstractions, on the other. Indeterminacy relies on a relationship of negative dependency to limits, particularly in cases where rationally derived systems of chance are employed, such as random number tables, coins, dice, cards, and so on, in which the experimental work emerges by way of rigorously upholding a chosen protocol. These systems may be layered at every level of the composition process in order to intensify the quality of indeterminacy, but at the cost of restricting the subjective freedoms of the performer. As Cage laid it out to his Darmstadt audience in September 1958:

To ensure indeterminacy with respect to its performance, a composition must be determinate of itself. If this indeterminacy is to have a non-dualistic nature, each element of the notation must have a single interpretation rather than a plurality of interpretations which, coming from a single source, fall into relation.¹³⁸

As I have noted previously about Cage, this was his goal: no relations, no form, no object, no fixed work. Cage's indeterminacy, as refined in his *Variations* series, atomized notation into disconnected points and lines, effectively killing the possibility of enduring structure. Disavowed too was the possibility of the performer's creative interpretation, as he or she was instead meant to approach the score like a disciplined technician, executing Cage's instructions by rote. (For this, Tudor's participation was crucial to the reception of Cage's most radical works. Tudor's rigorous methods of realizing them and his serious affect as a performer—a kind of stringent, disciplinary habitus—worked beneficially to combat accusations of fraudulence.)

In contrast to Cage's indeterminacy, Brecht rightly observed, the ambiguity of Brown's otherwise quite structured compositions appealed to no limits whatsoever. In other words, the fixed relations between the score's graphic elements welcome being unsettled by the reading subject's creative hermeneutics. Brown's practice invited a radical dispossession of the work by the composer so that it could be recast by an empowered beholder or performer. Here is Earle Brown reflecting on *November 1952* and *December 1952*:

I mean the results of those pieces do not belong to me. They never can be my property. The only thing I did, was to create the environment, the conditions under which people can get together and make music. You know, I am not an anti-ego, or the kind of ego which prides itself by being non-egoistic. I think there's a whole sophistry going on about ego [one suspects Brown is thinking of Cage here]. . . . But these pieces interest me, because they seem to be some of the first pieces which allow that situation of non-owning, and just because it says *December 1952*, Earle Brown. In the program notes, graphic score by Earle Brown: what you will hear, is the results of the collaboration between all of the people that do it.¹³⁹

Brecht made a similar observation in his 1957 essay "Chance-Imagery," a draft of which he had sent to Cage sometime around 1956, thereby launching their relationship (see fig. 25). The text provides a remarkable historicization and theorization of chance processes that also includes a methodological section outlining possible uses for coins, dice, numbered wheels, cards, bowl drawing, random numbers, automatism, and what Brecht refers to as "the irrelevant process"—the determination of form by means of a system unrelated to the work at hand, such as Cage's practice of marking notes along the imperfections of the composition paper.¹⁴⁰ Brecht is most deeply interested in the latter two categories, of automatism and irrelevant processes, which, in contrast to systems that derive from "mechanical processes" such as casting dice, are seen as poetically expansive,

drawing an art-historical “vector” through Dada practices and Duchamp’s sense of irony, Surrealist automatism and André Breton’s notion of the marvelous, to Pollock and other “present-day chance-imagists.”¹⁴¹ By “chance-imagery,” Brecht means to refer to:

our formation of images resulting from chance, wherever these occur in nature. (The word “imagery” is intentionally ambiguous enough, I think, to apply either to the physical act of creating an image out of real materials, or to the formation of an image in the mind, say by abstraction from a more complex system.)¹⁴²

In the most extreme examples of chance-imagery, Brecht explains, “significant images occur as the result of processes over which we exercise *no selection at all*.”¹⁴³ For example, “The most moving collage I ever experienced was the 4 x 4 x 24 foot side of a truck carrying boilers, a piece of canvas patched irregularly with other pieces of canvas of various shades of gray.”¹⁴⁴ This was to be a great freedom for the artist: “The receptacle of forms available to the artist thus becomes open-ended, and eventually embraces all of nature, for the recognition of significant form becomes limited only by the observer’s self.”¹⁴⁵ In other words, Brecht saw “the ability of humans to structure anything” as an inevitability from which there was no point in trying to engineer an escape and which instead ought to be celebrated and utilized by artists.¹⁴⁶

In Brecht’s estimation, human consciousness’s will to form was inescapable. On October 10, 1958, after the conclusion of Cage’s summer course and the composer’s departure to Europe, Brecht began to outline an essay, never published, called “Sources of Structure in Contemporary Music,” which charted the “necessity of internal relationships” of musical forms.¹⁴⁷ Beginning with classical, “pre-Schönberg” modal and tonal forms like the fugue and the sonata, Brecht’s notes outline the historical development of structure in music through Wagner, Stravinsky, neoclassicism, and the serial music of Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Stockhausen, and Boulez up to the contemporary as-yet-unclassified work of Cage, Feldman, Wolff, and Brown. Even chance and random methods were regarded by Brecht as upholding a kind of structural relation—that of non-relation.

At stake in Brecht’s turning away in the final instance from Cagean indeterminacy was the recognition that form in artistic practice ultimately cannot be evaded. Once evicted from the scene of composition, it will only turn up elsewhere. In Cage’s case, arguably formalism returned in the guise of Tudor’s highly disciplined realization and performance practice. If form could not be abolished, Brecht thought, it ought to be opened up to alternative modes of organization. And so, shortly after the draft of “Sources of Structure in Contemporary Music,” we find in his notebook the following text, dated October 24, 1958:

- A. The Problem: To construct situation in which it is made possible for light and sound events of any desired characteristics (frequency/wave-length, amplitude/brightness, duration, timbre/spectral distribution, morphology) to occur at any points in space and time.
- B. Requirements for the System
1. Maximum Generality (as above)
 2. Maximum flexibility (possibility for changing the nature of the universe of possibilities from which the elements of A. are chosen, and for changing the nature of the situation in which the elements of A. find themselves.)
 3. Maximum economy.¹⁴⁸

With Cage away in Europe, this was a kind of assignment Brecht gave himself to work through, and it seemed to guide the development of his own scores thereafter. The importance of these notes is their indication that the solution to the “problem” Brecht faced as an artist was not to be found in a new genre of object-making (e.g., assemblage) but in an understanding of aesthetic form alternative to the still-prevailing language of “significant form” held over from early twentieth-century formalist art theory, an anachronistic, perhaps even obsolete term in the face of the radically new notion of form Brecht was trying to describe.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, the language of art discourse at the time had not yet caught up with recent developments. Brecht’s compositions pursued the possibility of a form that played at the boundary of form and formlessness, objecthood and objectlessness by way of these three “requirements” of generality, flexibility, and economy. Having faced early on in Cage’s course the practical limits of complexly regimented systems of indeterminacy, he would now work toward simplification. His next pieces adopted simple organization systems such as decks of playing cards or cards inscribed with plainly written instructions. These latter pieces, his event scores, became in the ensuing years a foundational model for Fluxus production, providing the diagram for a new conception of the work of visual art as an artwork ever in flux.

In effect, the event scores of Fluxus artists were engaged with outlining appreciable aesthetic form via the ambiguities, nuances, and evocative capacities of a vastly expanded field of graphic communications and realized gestures, channeled through the experiences of different reading and performing subjects. Their works capitalized on the diagram’s dangerous semiotic mobility, and in this, their practice owed as much to the example of Brown as it did to Cage. While Cage ultimately rejected ambiguous notation in favor of more precise, mechanical forms of indeterminacy, ambiguity was embraced by Fluxus artists for the creation of a kind of artwork that, as Brecht described, would be “left as open as it could be and still have some shape.”¹⁵⁰

THE FLUXUS DIAGRAM

The best-known Fluxus scores, Brecht's *Drip Music* among them, employed vernacular language to schematically map out spatio-temporal arrangements of objects and actions, as if to enfold diagrammatic structure into language itself. The common characterization of the Fluxus event score as a primarily text-based format, however, has flattened out what was actually an incredible diversity of compositional styles, many of them quite iconic or pictorial. If one considers the range of graphic experimentation across Fluxus scores, text and image are consistently brought into meaningful counterplay. Even when the primary mode of communication is textual, diagrammatic visual traces remain. Brecht's scores often include bullet points, with some appearing independent of any text, unmistakably evoking Kandinsky and Cage's liberated points. Added to this are the numbered lists, parentheses, deliberate use of negative space, and even occasional images—punctuation and graphic elements that, as Liz Kotz has described, “function almost algebraically—as if to reduce language to a set of spatial relations.”¹⁵¹

For their part, Maciunas's scores adopted the grid in a most quotidian sense in the form of the administrative table, a recurring device seen across his scoring practice. A list of actions occupies a grid's left-hand side while a timescale appears across the top, and the performer is to choose and mark certain gestures to be performed over time. The tables can also be printed on transparent paper and populated by markings observed from an overlaid page of conventional music notation. In *Solo for Violin* (1962), a performer might play a sentimental

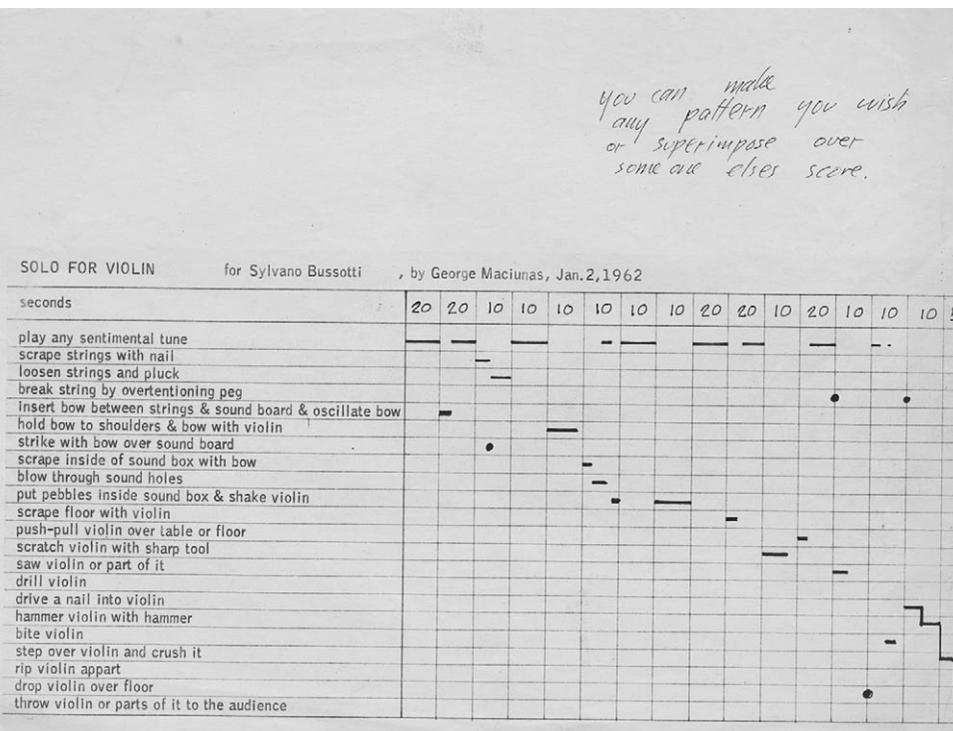


Fig 21. George Maciunas, *Solo for Violin*, 1962, diazotype with ink additions. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2380.2008. By permission of Billie J. Maciunas, PhD.

tural critique. They also responded pointedly to the rigorous, uncreative discipline expected of musical performers at the time, still standard for musical conservatory training today. As one respected music pedagogue described as recently as 1990:

Repetition, standardization, virtuosity, accuracy, perfection, and professionalization (with its emphasis on patterns of conformity) are the terms of our teaching—not experimentation, idiosyncrasy [*sic*], interaction, individuation, and especially not open-ended creative play.¹⁵³

Richard Taruskin has compared this musical regime to the conservative and conservational imperative of museums and their curators, language echoed by Goehr in her discussion of the emergence of an “imaginary museum of musical works.”¹⁵⁴ The site of Fluxus’s earliest actions, the auditorium of the Museum Wiesbaden, was thus a perfect location upon which the value systems of both music and the visual arts—in particular their protection of the absolute boundaries between the work, its author, and its audience—could be attacked and critically compared to broader forces of social control. In Maciunas’s scores, bodily limitations and frailties are highlighted, not mitigated, by rigorous structures, and Higgins’s *Graphis* mocks of-the-moment Taylorist workflow schemata. Benjamin Patterson’s booklet of scores, *Methods & Processes* (1962), pairs texts with photographic cutouts of figures from different disciplinary regimes (athletics, religion, etc.) marked with analytical measurements and activated by vectorial arrows (fig. 23). The total disciplining of mind and body dramatized in these works was a tactic dialectically counterpoised to the loosening of form and relation we find in scores like Brecht’s. The Fluxus embrace of diagrammatic visualization was also deployed, particularly by Maciunas and Higgins, in charting the relationships of various neo-avant-garde tendencies to contemporaneous and past art. Such diagrams were particularly useful in parsing out the significance of Fluxus’s “intermedia” and “rear-guard” aesthetics amid a broader postmodern turn.¹⁵⁵

Notations in myriad experimental, highly graphic forms continued to be a significant basis of Fluxus practice such that in 1969, Alison Knowles assisted Cage in the editing of *Notations*, an anthology of works drawn from Cage’s archive of musical graphics.¹⁵⁶ Published by Something Else Press, it includes conventional notations, graphic notations, text instructions, and even object-like documents meant to be read as notations, all complemented by quotations from their authors, over one hundred artists and composers. In many ways, *Notations* can be seen as a document of the rich terrain opened out in the aftermath of the notational experiments of the 1950s and 1960s first catalogued in *An Anthology of Chance Operations*. Now, however, the implications of that earlier publication had been pursued and elaborated on by musicians and visual artists beyond Cage’s immediate circle.

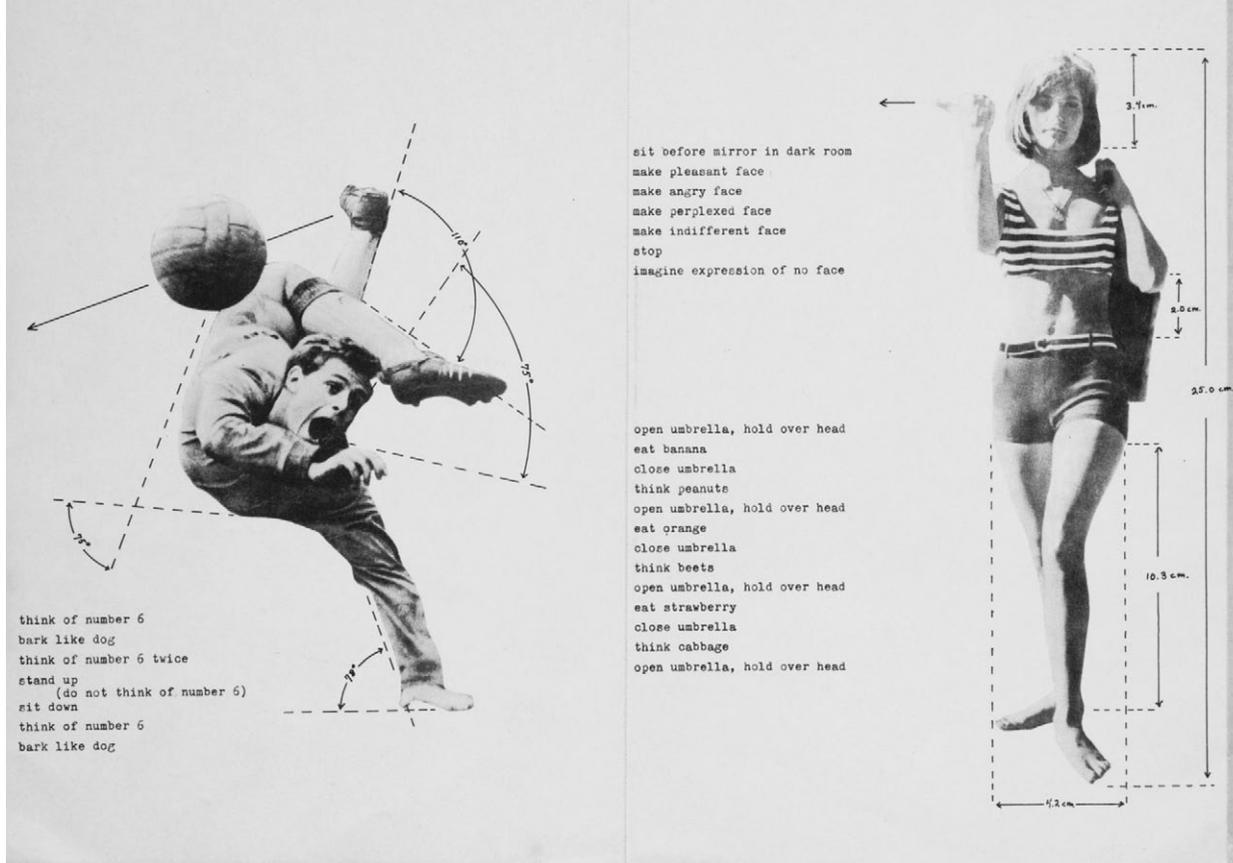


Fig 23. Benjamin Patterson, *Methods & Processes* (detail). First published in Paris, 1962. Artist's book, offset printed. Jean Brown papers, 1916–1995 (bulk 1958–1985), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (890164 and 2016.M.14). Courtesy of Benjamin Patterson Estate.

As we have seen, the debates around indeterminacy, improvisation, and ambiguity that emerged between 1950 and 1962 were a response to technological advances, but they were also part of a search for alternatives to musical form wholesale and a testing of the limits of musical identity. Cage's *4'33"* had been an important early effort to open up the field of music to all sounds, but by the late 1950s it had been replaced by efforts to let fall all boundaries whatsoever, even that of preconceived duration. While Cage's peers in music would pursue a kind of return to order, by the early 1960s, on the fringes of the visual art world, an irrepressible intermedia neo-avant-garde had been launched.

Although Cage and Fluxus would ultimately take diverging paths, in October 1962 Cage composed *o'oo"*, a kind of homage to the genre of scores he had witnessed emerging in his classroom and which made their public debut in the first Fluxus concerts that summer and fall (fig. 24). Cage's other compositions of this moment were continuations of his graphic experiments with points and lines combined with chance processes and appropriated organizational forms. In remarkable contrast, *o'oo"* was a "solo to be performed in any way by anyone," dedicated to the Japanese Fluxus affiliates Yoko Ono and Toshi Ichiyonagi during the time of Cage and Tudor's concert tour of Japan, organized on the invitation of the Sogetsu Art Center. Known also as *4'33"* (*No. 2*), the piece was a bookend and fitful counterpart to Cage's original silent piece, coming ten years later. Not only is *o'oo"* a mere paragraph of text, but it bears an uncommonly intersubjective charge

0'00"
SOLO TO BE PERFORMED IN ANY WAY BY ANYONE

FOR YOKO ONO AND TOSHI ICHTYANAGI

TOKYO, OCT. 24, 1962

John Cage

IN A SITUATION PROVIDED WITH MAXIMUM AMPLIFICATION (NO FEEDBACK), PERFORM
A DISCIPLINED ACTION.

WITH ANY INTERRUPTIONS.

FULFILLING IN WHOLE OR PART AN OBLIGATION TO OTHERS.

NO TWO PERFORMANCES TO BE OF THE SAME ACTION, NOR MAY THAT ACTION BE

THE PERFORMANCE OF A "MUSICAL" COMPOSITION.

NO ATTENTION TO BE GIVEN THE SITUATION (ELECTRONIC, MUSICAL, THEATRICAL).

10-25-62

THE FIRST PERFORMANCE WAS THE WRITING OF THIS MANUSCRIPT (FIRST MARGINATION ONLY).

THIS IS 4'33" (NO. 2) AND ALSO PT. 3 OF A WORK OF WHICH ATLAS ECLIPTICALIS IS PT. 1.

COPYRIGHT © 1962 BY HENMAR PRESS INC..

in its requirement that it be fulfilled as "an obligation to others." This obligation, of performing a "disciplined action" unbounded by preconceived duration, seems to be the work's only appeal to an enduring formal structure. It was, in effect, Cage's attempt at writing a Fluxus event score.

Because of their frequent basis in the written word, Fluxus event scores have been heralded as one of the earliest examples of a proto-conceptual impulse in art of the 1960s, and scholars have well theorized their mobilization of the indexical and symbolic qualities of textual language. As I have aimed to show, however, the event score drew crucial inspiration from graphic notations schematic or diagrammatic in nature, which qualify as iconic representations. They are thus grounded

Fig 24. John Cage, *o'00"* (*Solo to be performed in any way by anyone*) (4'33" (No. 2)), 1962. Copyright © 1962 by Henmar Press, Inc. Used by permission of C. F. Peters Corporation.

in a system of meaning that privileges analogies, relations, and correspondences over arbitrariness or structural difference. Scholarly focus on the rise of language in art of the 1960s, informed by structuralist and post-structuralist theory, has contributed to the persistent repression of certain visual and material qualities of work from this period, despite efforts launched in the late 1980s to reclaim the necessity of a semiotics of the image.¹⁵⁷ Brecht's event scores in particular have been recruited as part of this repression of the iconic, metonymically standing in for Fluxus scores in general and obscuring the wildly variant, highly visual examples developed by other members of the group. My emphasis on Fluxus's indebtedness to experiments in graphic notation of the 1950s intends neither to reject sophisticated linguistic readings nor to recuperate Fluxus for the field of visual studies. Rather, my argument—that these works function like diagrams and should be analyzed as such—aims to recuperate a sense of the porousness of the textual and visual at this moment.¹⁵⁸

In his account of the diagram in early twentieth-century avant-garde art, David Joselit proposes that “What has been called the postwar ‘dematerialization’ of art . . . is founded in a diagrammatic visuality that . . . is purely semiotic.”¹⁵⁹ The emergence of the Fluxus event score, I argue, was among the very first signs of the postwar reemergence of such a diagram model, carrying forward a lineage of critical artistic experiments with diagrammatic visualization that can be traced back to Dada and Cubism. In the 1950s, the development of the kinds of musical diagrams I have been examining contributed significantly to the diagram's transformation from a primarily visual morphology into an operational model of form affiliated with creative activity itself, thus laying the ground for Fluxus's artworks in flux to emerge. The applied, analogical mode of thinking invited by score formats and rendered visually explicit in music's graphic notations became in the Fluxus milieu a foundational principle of the artists' performance and object-based practices. It offered a means of rethinking the nature of aesthetic form, the ontology and materiality of the work of art, and collaborative approaches to production. Form could now be iterative, performative, and transitive but also ambiguous and thus morphologically flexible or topological. For diagrams, in their affiliation with materialist practices, are abstract structures intimately linked to our experience of physical objects and environments—paradoxical signifiers of a kind of “embodied utopianism.”¹⁶⁰ Fluxus's diagram-like scores functioned (to paraphrase Stjernfelt) as formal machines for thought experiments, supporting a rethinking of structures of relation on multiple levels: from the work, to that of collective practice, to the narratives of art's history.



Plate 1. George Brecht, *Chance Painting*, 1957. Bedsheet dyed with colored ink. Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, KML 2017.02. © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.



Plate 2. Jackson Pollock, *One: Number 31, 1950* (detail), 1950. Oil and enamel paint on canvas. Museum of Modern Art, New York, Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection Fund (by exchange), 7.1968. © 2020 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Plate 3. Alfonso Ossorio (1916–1990), *Fluxus*, 1956. Oil and enamel on canvas. 82 1/2 x 51 1/2 in. © Robert U. Ossorio Foundation; courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York.



Plate 4. George Brecht, *The Case*, 1959. Wood, glass, paper, metal, string, and found objects. 20 x 41 x 30 cm / 7 7/8 x 16 1/8 x 11 3/4 in. Photo courtesy Lothar Schnepf. Art © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

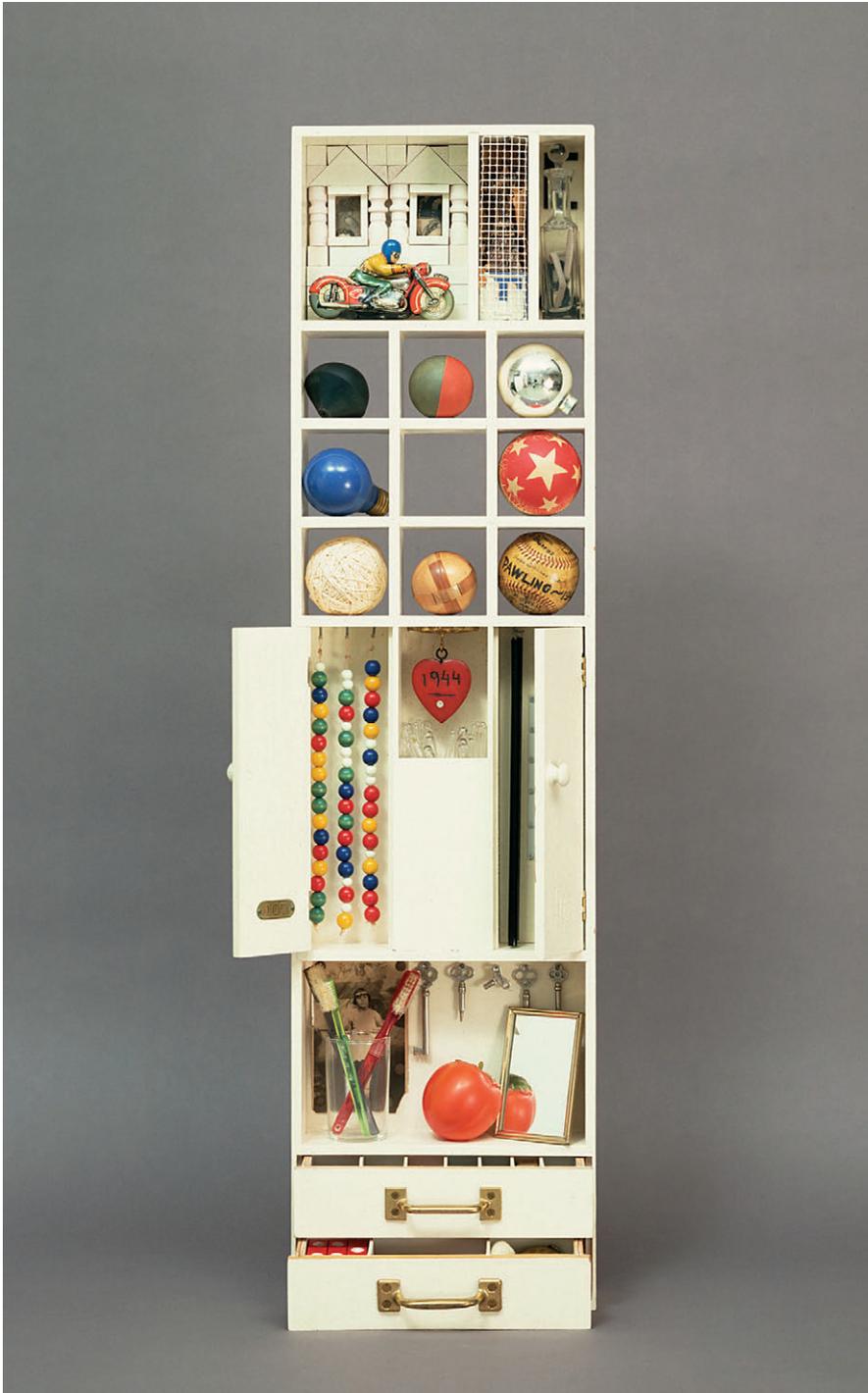


Plate 5. George Brecht, *Repository*, 1961. Wall cabinet containing pocket watch, tennis ball, thermometer, plastic and rubber balls, baseball, plastic persimmon, "Liberty" statuette, wood puzzle, toothbrushes, bottle caps, house number, pencils, plastic worm, pocket mirror, lightbulbs, keys, hardware, coins, photographs, playing cards, postcard, dollar bill, page from thesaurus. 40 3/8 x 10 1/2 x 3 1/8 in. (102.6 x 26.7 x 7.7 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York, Larry Aldrich Foundation Fund, 281.1961. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. Art © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.



Plate 6. Various artists, *Fluxus 1*, 1964/1965 (Fluxus Editions, New York). Graphic works, envelopes bound together with bolts, each housed in a wooden box: boxes various dimensions; bound envelopes 7 1/2 x 8 1/4 x 1 3/8 in. (19 x 21 x 3.5 cm). Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Plate 7. Various artists, *Fluxkit*, 1965 (this example: New York: Fluxus Editions, 1966). Vinyl-covered attaché case, containing objects in various media. Overall (closed) 13 3/8 x 17 1/2 x 4 15/16 in. (34 x 44.5 x 12.5 cm). Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photo: Glenn Halvorson.



Plate 8. Various artists, *Flux Year Box 2*, 1967 (Fluxus Editions, New York).
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Barbara and Peter Moore Fluxus Collection, Margaret Fisher Fund and gift of Barbara Moore/Bound & Unbound, M26448.1-43. Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College.



Plate 9. Larry Miller, *Orifice Flux Plugs*, 1974. Mixed media, plastic, paper, box. 9 1/8 x 13 1/8 x 2 15/16 in. Collection Walker Art Center, 1990.188.1-.48. Artwork © Larry Miller, 1974/2018.



Plate 10. Robert Watts, *Portrait of George Maciunas with elements from "Orifice Flux Plugs,"* 1974, by Larry Miller, 1977. Polaroid photograph. Robert Watts papers, 1883–1989, bulk 1940–1988, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2006.M.27). Photograph © Robert Watts Estate, NY, 2018.

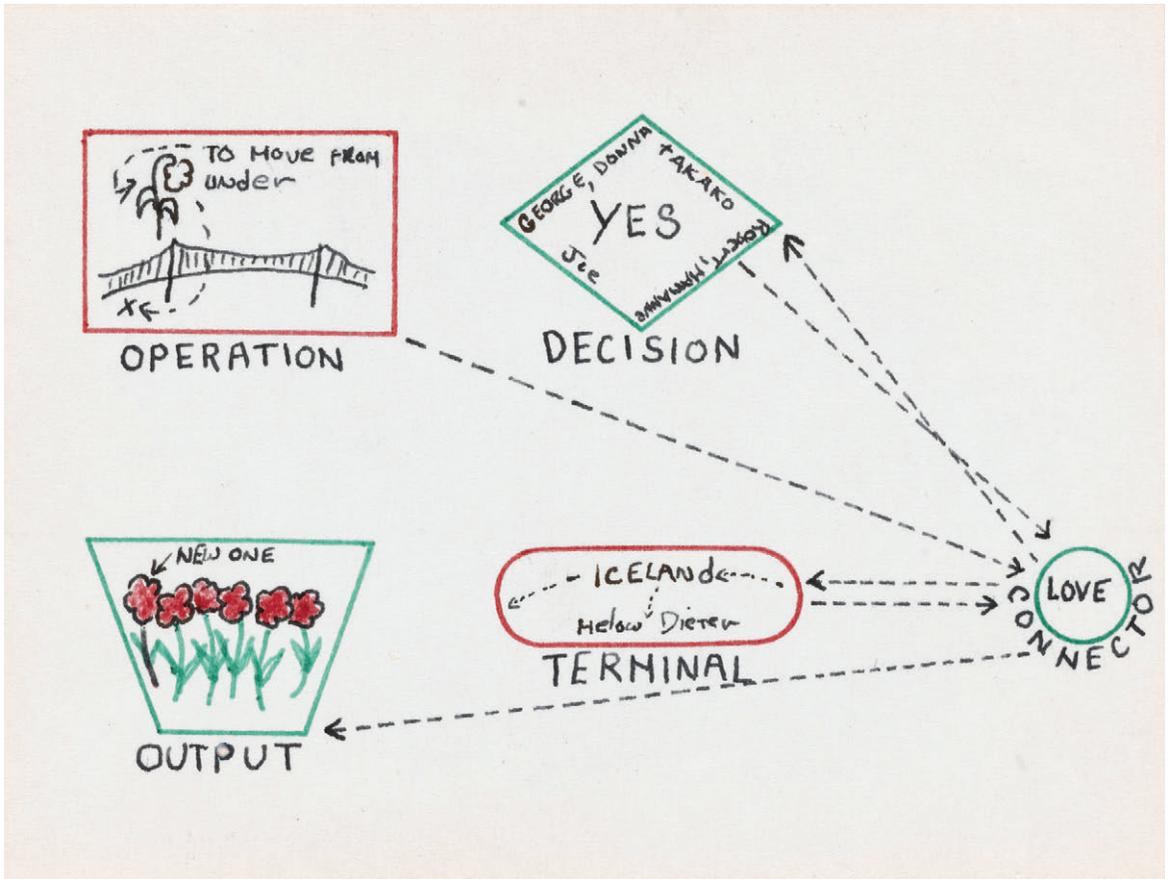


Plate 11. Joe Jones, *Untitled*, 1967. Ink on paper. Hanns Sohm Archiv, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart. Art © Michael Berger.

A PARIS
 chez Jacqueline Ranson, 4 rue de Furstenberg
LA CEDILLE
QUI SOURIT
 du 15 décembre au 31 janvier 1967
OFFERINGS
INATTENDUS
 conçus et réalisés par :

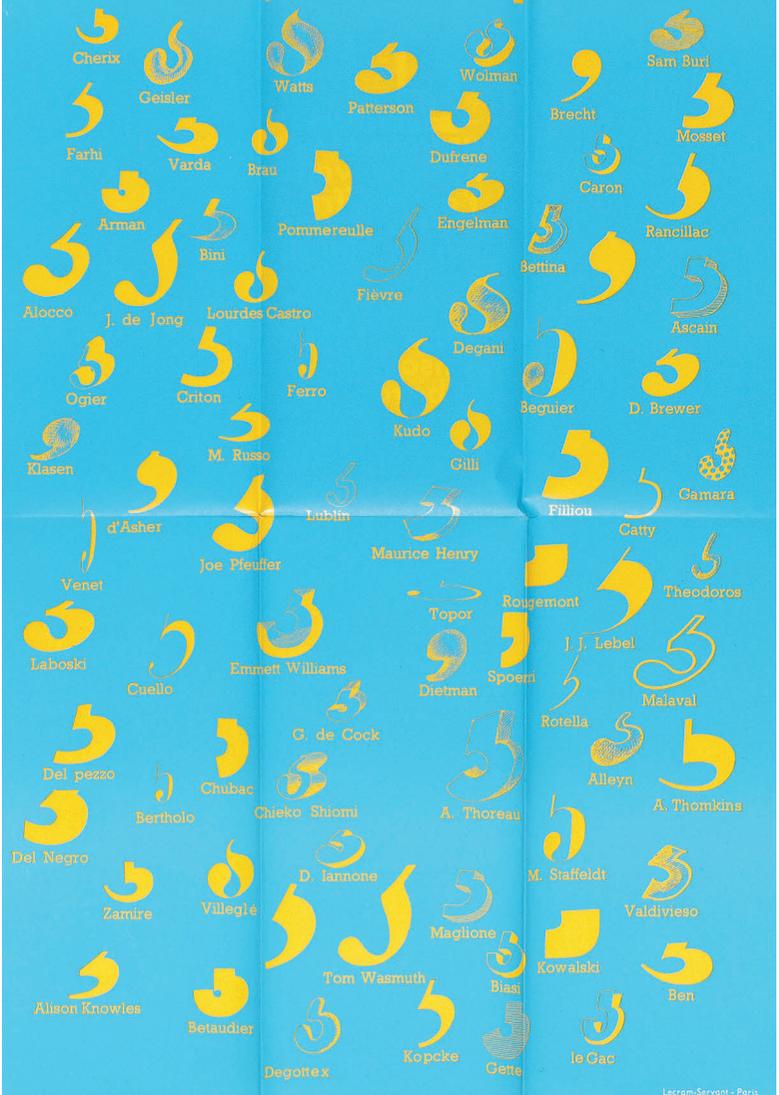


Plate 12. Robert Filliou, poster announcing La Cédille qui Sourit exhibition *Offerings inattendus* at Galerie Ranson, Paris, 1966. 74.1 x 32.9 cm. Hanns Sohm Archiv, AS 2018/7025. Photo: bpk Bildagentur / Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany / Art Resource, NY. © Marianne Filliou.

OWM

Of Drips, Diagrams, and Immanent Form

FLUXUS IN THE WAKE OF ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONIST PAINTING

Well I think in those times, one studied painting . . . We began with painting.

—ALISON KNOWLES¹

The summer of 1955 found George Brecht lying on the beach in Atlantic City, observing the largest collection of drips one can possibly imagine—the ocean: a seething, foaming mass of water, rhythmically falling apart and reassembling at its tidal edges. It was at this moment that, as the artist recounts, “It came to me that starting with dripping was ended. And what to do.”² For a thing so commonplace, the figure of the drip, along with the general phenomenon of dripping, carried a complex set of meanings for Brecht both within and beyond his developing artistic practice. Since 1950, Brecht had been pursuing a painting technique influenced by the abstract expressionist work of his favorite painter, Jackson Pollock. And in his day job at the time, as research chemist in the personal products division of

Johnson & Johnson, he was working to develop patentable designs for women's tampons. On a daily basis, Brecht was consumed with thoughts of the intricate physics of dripping, absorption, and the stopping up of liquid flows.

And yet it seemed to Brecht in this moment that starting with dripping was ended. By the mid-1950s, Pollock's drip technique, arrived at in 1947, was regarded as the paragon of abstract expressionist painting practice. At the same time, the technique had so clearly run out of possibilities for innovation under the aesthetic terms established by its most articulate supporters that a younger generation of artists—including Brecht—began to perceive it as exhausted, outmoded, spent. In 1956, the year of Pollock's early death, *Time* magazine sardonically referred to the artist as "Jack the Dripper"; Allan Kaprow's prescient 1958 essay on the legacy of Pollock described abstract expressionist materials and methods as the "clichés of college art departments"; and Andy Warhol would soon declare with dripping irony, "You must drip! . . . It means that you're an artist if you drip."³ The creative originality, authenticity, and existential gravitas once ascribed to the drip (among an extensive vocabulary of related painterly marks) had been depleted by way of the very repetition through which it had established legitimacy. Now, the drip came off as rote, an affectation. By 1965, the cashiered meaning of the drip was caricatured in Roy Lichtenstein's brushstroke paintings, in which dripping swaths of paint appear to be mechanically reproduced in the visual idiom of the comic book.

This is not to say, of course, that artists in the wake of Pollock stopped dripping. Art historians have identified the ways in which Pollock's techniques were productively recast by a generation of early postmodern artists, who understood the surface of his canvases not as the site of purely optical, disembodied perceptual experience, but as a low, horizontal, tactile, libidinal bed of indexical scratches, graphic accidents, and formless blots. Rosalind Krauss, for one, has catalogued the ways in which Pollock's mark was transformed in the ensuing decades: by Cy Twombly into erratic graffiti; by Warhol into "piss paintings" that adopted the phallus as painterly tool and the body's liquid waste as medium; by Robert Morris into the indeterminate gravitational pull on pliable materials like felt. Even Richard Serra's sculptural splashes in lead could be seen to reimagine Pollock's drip as the index of a repeated signature gesture. Such "strong misreadings" of Pollock, Krauss argues, showed "a perverse, but very canny, *deep* understanding" of the drip, "which liberates from within the target work a *potential* (often anarchic or transgressive) that had been hidden or obscured by the official, even self-professed, idea of the older artist's meaning."⁴ Such varied misappropriations and deviant reincarnations of Pollock's original gesture countered Greenbergian modernism's Kantian aesthetics and Hegelian model of history with a rhizomatic multiplication of meanings. By the 1960s, the drip, once considered the summa of abstract expressionist technique, signaled at every turn a crisis of high modernist notions of form and gesture.

Fluxus reworkings of abstract expressionism are a missing part of this well-known narrative. Already in George Brecht's pre-Fluxus years, he recognized that the drip had ossified into a readymade painterly style, and yet he continued to work with it nonetheless, mining alternative, experimental pathways focused on the drip as both material form and processual phenomenon. Brecht's refinement of his iconic event score *Drip Music (Drip Event)* over the course of 1959–1962 tracks the shift in the artist's concerns beyond the fields of painting and music, with their limited focus on visual or sonic events, to a multi-sensorial notion of the event, which would exceed prevailing notions of the theatrical and come to encompass the very act of perception itself. Importantly, although Brecht's advancement of the event and event score format was marked by his encounter with Cage, the development of his practice in this direction first began in conversation with Pollock's painterly drip. And he was not alone in this among Fluxus artists. Many began their artistic training working through and beyond available models of modernist painting. The drips that appeared across the output of Fluxus artists—including not only Brecht and Maciunas but also Nam June Paik, Tomas Schmit, and Mieko Shiomi, among others—marked a way of both relating to and departing from conventions of painting and sculpture that prevailed at the end of the 1950s. The presumption that Fluxus performance and publication work constituted an outright rejection of current painting and sculpture and was therefore incommensurable with modernism except through a relation of total opposition has left the collective's significant recodings of the materials and gestures of modernist painting underappreciated.⁵ To address this blind spot in Fluxus studies, this chapter reconstructs Fluxus understandings and deployments of the drip with particular focus on Brecht and Maciunas, who left the strongest historical record of artworks and writings that responded to the burdensome legacy of abstract expressionist painting. Through my narration of Fluxus artists' immanentist rereading of Pollock's drip technique, I will also arrive at a revisionist account of abstract expressionism that highlights modernism's ongoing relationship to Dada and neo-dadaist currents. Thus, this chapter provides not only a granular analysis of how Fluxus artists contended with the dominant strains of modern art of their time; it also helps us see the synergy between modernist painting and more overtly radical neo-avant-garde practices.

To borrow the language of Maciunas's Fluxus manifesto of 1963, the "flood" of Fluxus drips examined here sought to "purge" modernism's visually oriented formalism in favor of a more operational, processual notion of form. Achieved through a close engagement with abstract painting, Fluxus's "immanent formalism," as I call it, complemented the logic of the many Fluxus event scores that would be written, circulated, and performed in the wake of the collective's founding. While Fluxus adopted from graphic notation a diagrammatic notion of form—characterized in the previous chapter as an abstract, flexible structure open

to a broad range of interpretations—Fluxus artists’ engagements with the painterly drip engaged a complementary notion of the diagram that can be charted through the writings of Gilles Deleuze. This notion of the diagram attends to the vagaries of quantum mechanics, referring us to a given material’s innate energetic propensities and form-giving properties. Fluxus’s painterly and quasi-painterly drips explored the concrete physical “diagram” inherent to liquid pigment that predetermines the forms it can take. Ultimately, we will find that these two aspects of the diagram—the abstract (score) and the concrete (realization)—are not contradictory or divided within Fluxus; rather, they are correlate dimensions of a process-oriented understanding of form that continued to shape the group’s practice throughout the 1960s.

The chance implications of Pollock’s drip, it must be emphasized, did not manifest in Fluxus as a disavowal of structure or form. Rather, it led to the seizing of two alternative, thoroughly postmodern sources of aesthetic creation. The drip would demonstrate, first, that form is immanent to material or that materials contain within themselves a readymade formal language (what Deleuze calls “matter-function”), and second, that form can be discovered within the chaos of nature through the perceptual capacities of the beholder. Both avenues disavowed the role of the artist as privileged author of the work of art. This aesthetic potential, as Brecht argued in his 1956–1957 essay “Chance-Imagery,” was already demonstrated in Pollock’s work: “Paintings get to be what they are physically through an interaction of method and material, and they have their effect in an interaction between painting and observer. As far as the observer is concerned, Pollock has demonstrated that the ability of humans to appreciate complex chance-images is almost unlimited.”⁶ Fluxus artists’ explorations of the radically indeterminate potential of the drip opened up the possibility for automorphic, non-anthropogenic forms whose final coordinates, ever unpredictable, were a revelation to beholder and artist alike.

PAINTING CHANCE

And so, upon contemplating the tide on that listless summer day in 1955, George Brecht realized the drip was over. And what to do. Here is what, he decided: “I started a notebook of possibilities of making works by other chance methods.”⁷ Before abandoning completely the project of painting, Brecht pursued several modes of “corrected Abstract Expressionism” via detours through chance operations.⁸ The corrections he devised sought to bracket human agency from the painting process, raising the post-Duchampian question: could one displace or remove the intellectualizing, emoting human agent thought to engender the expressive content of a work of art—and still produce a work of art?

Brecht's two earliest approaches in this direction employed random number tables and staining techniques to derive the painting's ultimate composition from the materials' physical imperfections. Brecht explained, "I'd take, for example, Cartesian coordinates and choose the points using random numbers for the x and y coordinates, then connecting the dots. Or, in other works, instead of placing the points regularly, placing them at random. Or rolling marbles dipped in ink over plywood, so that irregularities in the surface appeared in the resultant form."⁹ In the first strategy, Brecht rigorously applied an external system to algorithmically generate chance forms, an approach that may be connected to an important early meeting he had around this time with Cage, who visited Brecht at his home along with David Tudor.¹⁰ In the second strategy, Brecht allowed the physical vagaries of his materials to interact with little intervention on his part. In the spring of 1956, Brecht exhibited some of these chance-derived works at a provincial gallery in Tinton Falls, New Jersey, alongside quasi-abstract paintings of urban street scenes by the artist Don Bloom. If Brecht's haphazard compositions of lines crisscrossing into spare geometries and crystalline structures did not immediately set his work off from Bloom's referential pictures, Brecht's statement reproduced in the exhibition announcement made clear how the motivations and processes of his work diverged in significant ways from the mainstays of modernist painting:

*Each painting is an entity which organizes itself and guides its own development. Because of my method of working, each form in the painting exists from the first as paint, rather than as an idea in my mind, later to be transformed into paint. Thus, my paintings have no pre-existent life, external or antecedent to themselves, and my function consists, not in design, but in choosing among various elements already present on a painted surface.*¹¹

Brecht's characterization of his paintings as entities that come into being as if of their own accord echoed Pollock's description of his own process, published almost a decade earlier in the journal *Possibilities*: "I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through."¹² Pollock's painterly notion of indeterminacy, shared broadly within abstract expressionist circles, saw the act of painting as a risky improvisational encounter with the canvas—unpredictable, alternately agonizing and exhilarating, and motivated by an "extremist faith in sheer possibility" that retained the artist-subject as its primary agent.¹³ Informed by yet also thinking beyond the limits of Pollock's model, however, Brecht's statement additionally invoked the Duchampian language of *choosing* among elements readily present in his materials. Furthermore, Brecht attributed the resulting forms of the compositions not to an internal wellspring of his own creative vision but to the natural

propensities of the paint and the irregularities of the surface with which it came into contact.

Brecht's next series of paintings would press this post-Pollockian logic even further. Born of yet another experimental technique, the *Chance Paintings* of 1956–1957 were made by the artist pouring a mixture of ink and water over a bunched-up bedsheet and waiting for the pigmented water to work its way through the fabric and then dry in elaborate patterns of intermingled stains (plate 1). Brecht had experimented with a similar method as early as 1950, creating “dribbled forms modified” with lacquer on Masonite, as well as drawings produced by releasing streams of ink over crumpled paper.¹⁴ A version of the ancient art of resist-dyeing (or tie-dye, as it would become popularly known), the *Chance Paintings* registered the liquid medium's tendency to pool, seep, and spread through crevasses formed within the fabric's haphazard arrangement. As the artist described, “Depending on the quantity and distribution of the water, and the time you leave it till that crumpled mass is practically dry, you'll get hard edges. Whereas if you open it before it's dry you'll get more cloudy edges to the forms.”¹⁵ The resulting compositions were achieved through a process largely beyond Brecht's direct control, indifferent to concerns of the visual, although he worked with the technique long enough to predict some typical qualities of the resulting stain patterns.

The stains captured in the extant *Chance Paintings* are soft and hazy, without clearly articulated boundaries. Mold-like, the liquid pigment has moved across and settled into the fabric support as if a self-directed organism. (In this way Brecht's paintings stand in marked contrast to the highly controlled, loosely figurative mode of stain painting that Helen Frankenthaler was honing around the same moment.) If quasi-figural shapes can be found, they are unintentional, having been delineated not by the artist's calculating eye and hand but by the natural limits of where, how far, and in what manner the painterly medium could physically travel. Unlike other artists of the moment who were working to advance the project of modernist painting, Brecht never made claims of control over his materials beyond anticipating the overall quality of the stains' edges, as the paintings were meant to capture the energetic possibilities of physical interaction between materials on their own. Indeed, in the *Chance Paintings*, compositional structure and discrete forms seem to materialize like the blooming of algae in water, the latticed articulations of a snowflake, the architectonic development of a crystal, or the delicate perfection of a soap bubble. Form derives from the materials' inherent qualities, the *immanent* formal potential of the materials themselves, rather than being forcefully applied as a preconceived armature to which a given material shall be made to fit (as the history of Western aesthetics would have it). Paint and ink in Brecht's *Chance Paintings* are not at the service of representation or even abstract composition; rather, they register the form-giving possibilities of pure viscosity and deliquescence. Foregrounding aspects of chance and unknowability already

broached in abstract painting of the 1950s, the paint in these works, mobilized as pure liquidity, becomes an active material signifier of continuous transformation. The discrete elements of modernist aesthetics' dialectical language of paint versus canvas, figure versus ground, push and pull are overturned, washed over, dehierarchized—in favor of an alternative order of non-anthropogenic interactions of materials with one another.

Brecht's close attention to the physical dynamics of his materials resonated remarkably with the immanentist philosophy being developed around the same time by Gilles Deleuze and published in several volumes over the course of the 1960s, including *Le Bergsonisme* (1966), *Différence et répétition* (1968), and *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (1968). In this body of work, Deleuze draws on Baruch Spinoza, Henri Bergson, and nineteenth-century studies of thermodynamics to elaborate, in Manuel De Landa's words, a vital materialist ontology of "immanent morphogenesis," in which matter is understood to be active, not passive. As De Landa explains, matter according to Deleuze "is already pregnant with morphogenetic capabilities, therefore capable of generating form on its own."¹⁶ Form, meanwhile, is thought to inhere *within* matter, in potentia; form is not imposed on matter from some imagined outside. In collaboration with Félix Guattari, Deleuze's materialist ontology was expanded in *Mille Plateaux* (1980) into a broad characterization of evolving systems of meaning-making—what the authors call "regimes of signification," or more pointedly "abstract machines"—the manifest contours and operations of which are described as being "diagrammatic" in nature:

An abstract machine in itself is not physical or corporeal any more than it is semiotic; it is *diagrammatic*. . . . It operates by *matter*, not by substance; by *function*, not by form. . . . The abstract machine is pure Matter-Function—a diagram independent of the forms and substances, expressions and contents it will distribute. We define the abstract machine as the aspect or moment at which nothing but functions and matters remain.¹⁷

Putting aside Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the abstract machine, I want to home in on their characterization of diagrams and the diagrammatic in terms of matter-function. In an ensuing passage, they write that matter is "a substance unformed either physically or semiotically," while function "has only 'traits' . . . it is no longer even possible to tell whether it is a particle or sign."¹⁸ The matter-function complex is composed, then, of:

a *matter*-content having only degrees of intensity, resistance, conductivity, heating, stretching, speed, or tardiness; and a *function*-expression having only "tensors," as in a system of mathematical, or music, writing. Writing now functions on the same level as the real, and the *real materially writes*.¹⁹

In the previous chapter, I appealed to semiotic theories of the diagram to describe the appearance and operations of experimental musical notations of the 1950s, which imparted important visual and conceptual frameworks to Fluxus. Here, I want to expand the present study's operative notion of the diagram to encompass Deleuze's diagram, which, as De Landa points out, has in fact "no intrinsic connection with visual representation"²⁰ (although *Mille Plateaux* opens, it must be noted, with a work of graphic notation: a reproduction of one of Sylvano Bussotti's *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor*, from 1959). A diagram for Deleuze is not iconic or static; it is not something we can readily see. It is best understood via the concept of matter-function: a notion of materiality enervated by vectors of potential, by loosely structured, somewhat predictable, and yet ultimately indeterminate movements and compositional orders. In this way, Deleuze's diagram maintains the familiar quality proposed by Frederik Stjernfelt of being a "formal machine for *Gedankenexperimente*."²¹ But Deleuze's diagram is also resolutely immanent rather than ideational or semiotic. It is not even necessarily human-generated. He posits that *matter itself* produces its own kind of thought experiments as "the real materially writes" itself into existence into and through form. We are back, it seems, to our most basic definition of the diagram: dia-gram, or through-writing.

Deleuze helps us appreciate—as Brecht the physical chemist undoubtedly did—that liquid pigment's propensity to drip, bleed, splatter, and stain, traceable to the molecular level, provides a natural, immanent formal structure to the material, an inherent diagram for potential form that Brecht's *Chance Paintings* sought to explore and record. These paintings registered paint's matter-function, its capacity on a microphysical level for aesthetically remarkable, automatic transformation. Maciunas's *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings* of 1961, also a version of proto-Fluxus chance painting (to which I will later turn), would similarly explore the matter-function of paint. For both artists, each chance-derived painting was the unique revelation of a repeated gesture akin to the relationship that developed between Fluxus event scores and their manifold realizations. If aesthetic form in Fluxus operated simultaneously on the levels of the abstract and concrete—alternating between the two as a performed work can be understood to exist on the level of score and performance, proposal and realization—then these painterly experiments were likewise structured by an ongoing dialectic between the diagrammatic force of paint's matter-function and the stilled intricacies of each finished work.

POLLOCK'S CHANCE

Apart from Deleuze's compelling theory, Brecht's essay "Chance-Imagery," drafted in 1956–1957 but not published until 1966, provides a concrete record of the larger

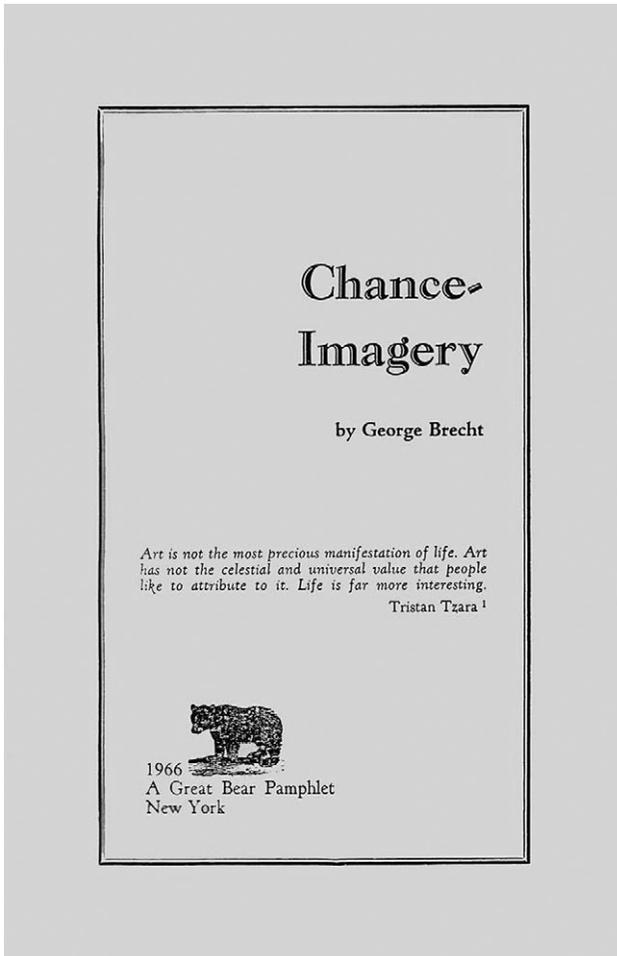


Fig 25. George Brecht, *Chance-Imagery* (cover), *A Great Bear Pamphlet* (New York: Something Else Press, 1966).

horizon of his thinking about chance operations in this moment (fig. 25). Written in the tone of a scientific report, the text catalogues methods through which artists have attempted to cede control over their work to forces beyond rational consciousness. Beginning with Dada and Surrealism and continuing through Pollock to Cage, Brecht places his examples along a spectrum between mechanical forms of chance (such as rolling dice, flipping a coin, or, as in the case of Tristan Tzara's Dada poetry, drawing words from a hat) and Surrealist automatism, in which images are thought to emerge spontaneously from the unconscious. Brecht relates these artistic explorations of chance to revolutions in scientific thinking, particularly theoretical physicist Werner Heisenberg's 1927 principle of indeterminacy, through which "chance became an underlying principle of our worldview."²² (Of note, Heisenberg was also responsible for repopularizing the Aristotelian notion of hylomorphism, which understands matter and form to be always necessarily co-present.)²³ Brecht was simultaneously engaged with Hans Reichenbach's writings on quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity, concerned

with the interrelations of matter and energy and the fundamental unknowability of the material world and its phenomena.²⁴ Following this historical and theoretical exegesis, “Chance-Imagery” concludes with a series of practical suggestions for invoking chance—from the use of coins, dice, numbered wheels, and cards to bowl drawing, automatism, and random numbers. Finally, Brecht adds to this list what he calls “the irrelevant process,” in which choices are made using an external system that bears no logical relation to the elements at hand. For example, Brecht mentions Cage’s device of writing musical compositions by marking the imperfections of a sheet of staff paper as well as his own process, previously described, of making paintings by releasing pigment-covered marbles to roll in unpredictable patterns across the support.

Brecht’s discussion of Pollock in “Chance-Imagery” deserves special consideration, as Pollock is framed rather unconventionally for the time as a hinge between the historical avant-gardes and the postwar experimentalism of Cage, given that the painter engaged both automatist and mechanical modes of chance. Brecht’s particular interest in Pollock’s drip technique centers—absolutely against the painter’s famous diktat, “NO CHAOS DAMN IT”—on the implications of that fateful gap, both spatial and temporal, that the drip opened between the end of the painter’s implement and the surface of the canvas. This gap introduced an ineluctable unpredictability as to just precisely *how* individual drips would fling from the end of Pollock’s reach and lengthen midair in attenuated arcs before coming to rest on the canvas as so many frozen tendrils. More than an index of an autographic gesture, the drip was for Brecht a revelation of the physical qualities of paint as material. Thinking as a chemist, Brecht wondered at this: “The infinite number of variables involved in determining the flow of fluid paint from a source not in contact with the canvas cannot possibly be simultaneously taken into account with sufficient omniscience that the exact configuration of the paint when it hits the canvas can be predicted.”²⁵ He then lists out all the variables that would have to be considered: the paint’s viscosity, density, direction, speed, and rate of flow (also known, it deserves mention, as *flux*), as well as Pollock’s way of holding and waving about his paint applicator. “To say nothing,” Brecht adds, “of non-uniformity in the paint.”²⁶ The spatio-temporal gap between the end of Pollock’s paint stick and the canvas was for Brecht *the* decisive, immensely provocative interregnum that enabled a set of physical variables to interact in potentially infinite, unforeseen ways.

Brecht makes special note of the subtle plumes of osmotically curdled paint in Pollock’s *One: Number 31, 1950* (1950, plate 2), which was on view in a solo exhibition of the painter’s work at the Museum of Modern Art from December 1956 to February 1957 (fig. 26). The painting, installed in conversation with the revelatory work on glass, *Number 29* (1950), could also be considered in relation to Pollock’s watercolors and drawings of 1951–1952, which explored techniques of



staining. In *One: Number 31, 1950*, observed Brecht, “differently colored streams of paint have flowed into each other after application, resulting in a commingling completely out of the artist’s hands.”²⁷ This phenomenon is visible across many of Pollock’s paintings from the time: adjacent areas of differently colored paint meet and blend into one another, resulting in a marbled effect. Compared to Pollock’s much-discussed thrown skeins, rendered and understood mainly through the decisive logic of the composed line, the reticulated fields and unbounded, murky zones Brecht draws our attention to are owed to the vectoring propensities of the paint itself *as liquid*, and they form only *after* the paint has come to rest on the canvas. In Pollock’s painterly process, understood by Brecht as automorphic or self-forming rather than autographic, the canvas is the site of material interactions that render the artist a passive spectator of the work’s self-generation, producing what Julia Robinson has called “directness *without* expression.”²⁸ Indeed, Brecht’s Pollock engages a kind of atomic automatism in which the canvas’s thinned arcs, whorls, and bleeds register the molecular workings of paint. They seem, even in their motionlessness, as if they might be still wet, or as if the fixed liquid interlacing could become spontaneously reanimated, set into motion again. For as a scientist, Brecht understood: “Matter is made of energy, out of atoms. Energy can become material.”²⁹ It was a basic fact of life, and he saw it at work in Pollock’s paintings. A decade before Robert Morris would

Fig 26. Installation view of the exhibition *Jackson Pollock*, December 19, 1956–February 3, 1957. Photographic Archive, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, IN612.7. © Soichi Sunami, photographer. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

make claims for the innovations of post-minimal and process art being rooted in a rereading of Pollock along similar lines, we have in Brecht's "Chance-Imagery" an account of Pollock's dripped forms as remarkably processual, a "direct revelation of matter itself."³⁰ While Pollock was committed to repressing the evocation of disorder in his practice (e.g., claiming that "It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess"³¹), his inadvertent challenge to artistic intentionality was for Brecht a signal achievement: "Never before Pollock were chance processes used with such primacy, consistency, and integrity, as valuable sources of affective imagery."³²

In Clement Greenberg's 1948 essay "The Crisis of the Easel Picture," the critic famously positioned Pollock's allover, "decentralized," "polyphonic" drip pictures in a precarious zone between the realms of fine art and decoration.³³ Following this logic, one could expand the terms of this positive-negative binary to include fine art versus non-art, fine art versus the arbitrary, or the man-made versus the natural. In light of Brecht's reading of Pollock's drip, we can see how the drip paintings' "fatal ambiguity" (to borrow more of Greenberg's language) threatened the medium of painting like an infection, the first symptoms of which we might now detect in those wet-on-wet passages, which coagulate like a primordial ooze. Faced with the drip's potential arbitrariness and anti-subjectivism, however, Pollock ultimately withdrew from the most radical implications of his technique before it could overwhelm what he saw as the carefully balanced rhythms and harmonies of his allover pictures. The nebulous sprays and marbled pools over which Brecht marveled appear with great frequency in the drip paintings Pollock executed just before his black paintings of 1951–1953 reinstated the artist's assured, calligraphic line and roughly sketched figures.³⁴

Brecht's reading of Pollock's drip, attuned to the vagaries of physical chemistry, diverged significantly from the well-known account given by Allan Kaprow in "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," a text often taken to stand wholesale for the neo-avant-garde reception of the late painter's work. First drafted in 1956 and then published in the October 1958 issue of *Art News*, Kaprow's text was composed shortly before he and Brecht met. Pollock's work was likely a topic of conversation during their weekly carpools from New Jersey to New York to attend Cage's experimental composition class together.³⁵ For both men, about fifteen years Pollock's junior, the drip signaled many of the same things; namely, that the artwork would no longer be a unique object fully present to the viewer in a single glance. Instead, it would unfold through space and time—in the viewer's experience of it, if not as an entity in and of itself. Confronted in 1950 with the floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall installation of Pollock's mural-sized drip paintings at Betty Parsons Gallery, Kaprow wrote, "It is necessary to get rid of the usual idea of 'Form,' i.e., a beginning, middle, and end, or any variant of this principle." The works' engrossing scale was of a painting moving beyond itself, an art that would "lose itself out of

bounds,” tending toward environment and away from form understood in relation to the delimitation of a pictorial object.³⁶

Next to his appreciation of the paintings’ massive scale, Kaprow’s text celebrated the performative nature of Pollock’s process. Kaprow was less interested in what the individual drips and overall composition looked like visually than he was in Pollock’s “dance of dripping, slashing, squeezing, daubing.”³⁷ Like Harold Rosenberg, who in 1952 had famously described the abstract expressionist canvas as “an arena in which to act,” Kaprow understood the drip as a signature that affirmed the presence of an active subject.³⁸ Later he would reflect, “I was concerned with the implication that action painting—Pollock’s in particular—led not to more painting, but to *more action*.”³⁹

By contrast, as we have seen, Brecht saw the canvas as an arena in which *paint* would act, a view for which he struggled to find intellectual and aesthetic models. The paintings of the Japanese Gutai group were one inspiration, which Brecht came to know belatedly through a small 1958 survey exhibition curated by the French exponent of Informel painting Michel Tapié at Martha Jackson Gallery, where Brecht would soon show his own proto-Fluxus object-arrangements. Many of the Gutai paintings on view there were achieved through incidental processes, such as the reaction of chemicals on paper (Toshiko Kinoshita) or the dripping of paint from a toy truck rolled over the canvas (Akira Kanayama). The show was reviewed in the *New York Times* by Dore Ashton, and Brecht reportedly brought the article to the attention of Robert Watts with great excitement. Given what Brecht had recently been pursuing in his own experimental painting practice, he was likely turned on by this description of Gutai’s “informal” or “formless” work: “Far from being autographic, the automatism in these paintings is eerily anonymous; a great tangle of lines spreading netlike over the world in an equalizing action.”⁴⁰ Ashton’s take was ultimately negative, but the anonymous quality of the work, characterized in her review as a deficit, was for Brecht its greatest interest.

JOHN CAGE AND THE INDETERMINACY OF MATERIAL

The Gutai revelation came too late, however, for Brecht’s unorthodox interests had already led him away from painterly circles of influence and toward Cage, whose experimental composition course Brecht attended in the summers of 1958 and 1959. There, he was encouraged to pursue approaches to autogenic form through the matrix of performance in ways that recalled Cage’s early experiments with percussion, an overlooked moment in the composer’s development worth reconstructing here. The model of Cage’s engagement with a materially immanent notion of form outside the realm of modernist painting supported the transition of Brecht’s energies from painting to proto-Fluxus events in the late 1950s.

Cage's departure from the mentorship of Arnold Schoenberg in the 1930s, purportedly because the aspiring composer had no ear for harmony, coincided with a deep dive into percussion music. Cage worked as an accompanist, devising rhythmic compositions for modern dancers, and in 1938 moved from California to Seattle to take up a position at Cornish College of the Arts, seduced by the promise of access to a closet filled with hundreds of percussion instruments. Soon he formed a touring percussion ensemble and began writing compositions for the prepared piano. Cage's insertion of commonplace objects and materials in between the piano's strings (thereby "preparing" it) disturbed the instrument's ability to articulate a coherently organized tonal structure and privileged instead the piano's raw percussive qualities. During this period Cage worked with percussion in the broadest possible sense, employing a motley collection of traditional musical tools in tandem with everyday objects. By 1940, he had amassed a collection that included not only multiple kinds of drums, cymbals, bells, and beaters, but also wood blocks, bones, shells, drum brakes, thunder sheets, ashtrays, a police whistle, and a washtub.⁴¹

The significance of all this lay in the quite different role percussion plays in musical composition and performance than most other instruments in the Western tradition. The pitch and duration of a percussed note may be determined by the material constraints of the instrument itself as an object rather than by continuous manipulations made by the player's breath or hands. This is especially the case with Cage's favored idiophones (a musical term whose literal meaning is "distinct sound"), such as bells, gongs, and wood blocks, which emit indefinitely pitched sounds as a whole object through vibrations of a resonant solid material without membranes or strings. Percussion's innate duration—the fact that, as Cage described in 1948, "no human power can make the sound of a wood-block last longer than it, by its nature, is going to"—was attractive to him as a positive limitation.⁴² Having registered in his developing theoretical apparatus two kinds of musical expression, "that arising from the personality of the composer and that arising from the nature and context of the materials," Cage decided that an expression "was stronger and more sensible when not consciously striven for, but simply allowed to arise naturally."⁴³ With this in mind, some pieces from his early career, such as *Quartet* (1935), were written as a rhythmical structure only, with the instrumentation left unspecified. If we can accept, as Cage did, that the percussed note's ultimate unpredictability and uncontrollability lends it an immanent indeterminacy—or rather a *materially* determinate indeterminacy—it is possible to trace his turn to chance operations to an earlier moment in his career than is typically recognized. For while Cage's 1951 *Music of Changes* is commonly regarded as his first composition to employ mechanical derivations of chance (via the *I Ching*), his percussion experiments of the 1930s and 1940s had already engaged a dimension of the aleatoric, albeit through deeply material means.⁴⁴

INCIDENTAL MUSIC

Five Piano Pieces,

any number playable successively or simultaneously, in any order and combination, with one another and with other pieces.

1.

The piano seat is tilted on its base and brought to rest against a part of the piano.

2.

Wooden blocks.

A single block is placed inside the piano. A block is placed upon this block, then a third upon the second, and so forth, singly, until at least one block falls from the column.

3.

Photographing the piano situation.

4.

Three dried peas or beans are dropped, one after another, onto the keyboard. Each such seed remaining on the keyboard is attached to the key or keys nearest it with a single piece of pressure-sensitive tape.

5.

The piano seat is suitably arranged, and the performer seats himself.

Summer, 1961. G. Brecht

Fig 27. George Brecht, *Incidental Music*, 1961. Mimeograph. David Tudor papers, 1884-1998 (bulk 1940-1996), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (980039). © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Cage's early experiments in musical automorphism with percussion were of renewed relevance to the work done in the late 1950s in the composer's experimental composition classroom, where participants including Kaprow, Brecht, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, and Jackson Mac Low explored the sonic and theatrical potential of everyday objects and materials. By this point in Cage's career, his investment in indeterminacy and sonic multiplicity was intellectually grounded not only in the Asian philosophies of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Daisetz T. Suzuki, but also in the vitalist thought of Henri Bergson, whose critique of nonbeing argued that the seeming chaos of nature could be appreciated as an alternative, non-anthropogenic order.⁴⁵ In this context, Brecht sought ways of avoiding externally imposed compositional orders to instead derive the frameworks of his performances more "naturally" from the materials deployed within them. Eventually not even clock time, that time by which we measure everyday life, was a sufficiently immanent structuring device.⁴⁶ "There was a general feeling," Brecht explained, "that clock time was not the way to do it. But the problem that I'd posed for myself with the *Candle-Piece for Radios*, for example, was that the duration of the piece shouldn't be set beforehand but that it should come from within the piece itself."⁴⁷ Indeed, his score *Candle-Piece for Radios* (1959), written for Cage's class, relied on birthday candles to provide both illumination for performers to silently read and act out directions from stacks of instruction cards as well as a natural time-length for the piece, since the candles would eventually burn out. It was a common feature of Brecht's compositions of this time to conclude at the extinguishing of a candle or the completion of a final task delegated via a set of cue cards. Next to *Candle-Piece's* immanent duration, his *Incidental Music* (1961), which describes five actions to be taken on and around a piano, likewise pursued immanent sonic events (fig. 27). Sounds are produced "incidentally" by way of task-based gestures such as building a stack of wooden blocks inside the body of the piano until it falls over and dropping dried beans onto the keyboard and taping them down where they land. Such efforts to structure a performance piece in terms of the innate qualities of a readymade material or an unselfconsciously executed gesture would soon characterize Fluxus notions of the concrete, with many Fluxus artists besides Brecht mining that dimension of Cagean indeterminacy invested in immanent formalism—the derivation of compositional structures and artistic materials from the context (spatial, material, and/or temporal) of the work's appearance.

THE NATURE OF CHANCE

As in his *Chance Paintings*, Brecht's early performances sought to displace the agent of aesthetic form-giving in two alternative directions away from the artist-performer: toward materials chosen for their self-structuring potential on the

one hand, and toward the perceptual capacities of the beholder on the other. It is debatable how successful any artist could possibly be in the goal of disavowing the centrality of the maker's ego in a creative practice. At the same time, in no way did Brecht pursue the abandonment or abolishment of form. Rather, his gestures raised the question of whether appreciable aesthetic form could arise from forces other than the artist's hand and intellect. Non-anthropogenic forms of this variety were the basis of his notion of "chance-imagery," developed in an essay written alongside the production of his *Chance Paintings* in 1956–1957, and he initiated contact with Cage by sending him a draft of the text around that time. In the version ultimately published by Something Else Press in 1966, Brecht explains his invention of the term "chance-imagery" this way:

One reason for doing this is to place the painter's, musician's, poet's, dancer's chance images in the same conceptual category as natural chance-images (the configuration of meadow grasses, the arrangement of stones on a brook bottom), and to get away from the idea that an artist makes something "special" and beyond the world of ordinary things. An Alpine peak or an iris petal can move us at times with all the subtle power of a "Night Watch" or one of the profound themes of *Opus 131*. There is no a priori reason why moving images should originate only with artists.⁴⁸

Prefiguring his own event scores—those temporal readymades that would soon proliferate and flourish in the context of Fluxus—Brecht places the greatest works of human creation on an equal plane with the relatively passive act of noticing forms in the environment as they already are. By the end of his text, Brecht has shifted from a discussion of procedures for creating chance forms to arguing for the importance of simply appreciating the chance-imagery to be found in nature and everyday experience.

From this point, Brecht worked toward translating the acts of perceptual framing that he so valued into a workable artistic format, and this would become the event score: a textual description or instruction designed to enable the continual reframing and re-seeing of forms embedded within varied everyday contexts. The event score was both a template for a kind of immanent form that would be remarkably mobile and shapeshifting *and* a conceptual device that could close around an almost infinite variety of content. By 1962, Brecht even understood Pollock's drip paintings as chance-imagery of a sort, newly reframed and made appreciable via his event score *Drip Music*, dated 1959–1962 to indicate that it had encompassed several years of Brecht's thinking. In the year of the score's completion, he wrote in his notebook, "The second version of *Drip Music* [which reads simply 'dripping'] includes the Pollock paintings of ca. 1947–51."⁴⁹ If starting with dripping was ended, the event score was what Brecht committed

to instead. It was not an abandonment of the drip as form or technique, but it was surely a transformation of it beyond all recognition as painting.

MACIUNAS, AG GALLERY, AND THE HYDROKINETIC-OSMOTIC PAINTINGS

The late 1950s also found George Maciunas preoccupied with abstract expressionist painting. Unlike Brecht, however, Maciunas “had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the avant-garde” (at least according to the accounts of Henry Flynt and La Monte Young).⁵⁰ While Maciunas was still getting to know the New York avant-garde scene, mainly through the concert series organized by Young at Yoko Ono’s loft at 112 Chambers Street in 1960–1961 and through Richard Maxfield’s experimental composition course at the New School (Maxfield having taken over Cage’s course in 1959), the Fluxus founder’s activities were focused on the operations of AG Gallery. Maciunas co-ran AG with fellow Lithuanian-American Almus Salcius, who had formerly operated Almus Gallery out of his home in Great Neck, Long Island. With Maciunas on board and the gallery so renamed, AG moved to 925 Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side. Its mysterious acronym was often taken to stand for Almus-George or Avant-Garde, even though its exhibition program mainly showcased derivative modernist art.

Maciunas’s contribution to AG was mainly in the organization of concerts and other performative events, which he promoted through bold, eye-catching announcements marked with the gallery’s logo, in which the letters “aG” were rendered in mirror-image decalomania. Presented under the overarching title “Musica Antiqua et Nova,” Maciunas’s programming was billed as an exploration of musical “polychromy” (his idiosyncratic term for music with rich color or timbre) from the Renaissance to the contemporary. Of Cage’s inclusion in the series, Maciunas later explained, “For me the prepared piano was another device to extract musical color from a very, let’s say, colorless or abstract instrument.”⁵¹ Between May and July 1961, Cage, Maxfield, Young, Flynt, Higgins, Mac Low, Toshi Ichihyanagi, Joseph Byrd, Walter De Maria, and Ray Johnson were all featured in solo “Musica Antiqua et Nova” events. This dimension of AG Gallery’s program overlapped significantly with the prior concert series at Ono’s loft, and Young facilitated Maciunas’s connection with some of the artists he hoped to include, such as Brecht.⁵² However, the two men avoided presenting the exact same works, and Maciunas’s stylish accordion-fold announcements, featuring striking photo-portraits created expressly for AG’s promotional purposes, contrasted noticeably with Young’s austere, functionalist mimeographed programs with their ever-present, intransigent mantra: THE PURPOSE OF THIS SERIES IS NOT ENTERTAINMENT. As Owen Smith has remarked, unlike the Chambers Street concerts, Maciunas’s objective with “Musica Antiqua et Nova” was to

build and expand the audience for experimental performance in New York.⁵³ His widely advertised programming was intended to be educational and indeed at times entertaining.

Meanwhile, AG Gallery's exhibition schedule remained under the aegis of Salcius as a continuation of his previous activities on Long Island: exhibitions typically of second-generation abstract expressionist painters, many of Lithuanian descent, who paid the gallery to have their work shown there. Nevertheless, Maciunas probed the radical edges of AG's retrograde exhibition program by dabbling in abstract painting himself, and he occupied the space with a solo show of his *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings* from May 8 to 21 (fig. 28). Somewhere between painting and drawing, they were made by releasing droplets of India ink onto rice paper or white paperboard already saturated with pools of water, and then leaving the liquids to intermix and evaporate. If we consider Maciunas's programming at AG alongside this little-known body of paintings, it becomes apparent that he was working through the most radically anti-subjectivist implications of gesture painting at the same time that he began to promote proto-Fluxus strains of experimental music, literature, and film invested in noise and non-virtuosic, everyday sounds and gestures. While Maciunas is best known for his work as a designer and concert organizer, his brief experiment with painting, consonant in many ways with Brecht's, was formative to the articulation of neo-avant-garde energies he would present to European audiences in the very first named Fluxus events of the following year.

For his *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings*, Maciunas invented a way of capturing the dynamic interactions of pigment, liquid, and absorbent support in stain patterns of spectacularly intricate, chance-derived blots, fractals, and whorls. The vividly descriptive name Maciunas gave to his newly devised painterly format foregrounded the liquid medium as primary agent in the creation of automatic abstractions. According to Jonas Mekas, Maciunas produced the paintings quite perfunctorily, enlisting Mekas's help so that an overlooked gap in AG's exhibition program could be filled with an "instant show":⁵⁴

One day I walked into the gallery and I found George on the floor, stretching canvasses [*sic*], and he engaged me in helping him. We prepared some 20 canvasses [*sic*]—if my memory is correct—exactly the same sizes, c. 24 x 30 [in]. Next, George brought a bucket of water and poured it over the canvasses [*sic*]. He then picked up a can of black ink and began dripping it on the canvasses [*sic*]. In fifteen minutes or so he had 20 brand new "abstract" paintings ready for a show.⁵⁵

Despite Mekas's characterization of the series as a one-off stunt, Maciunas's elegantly designed announcement for the show suggests the work was produced

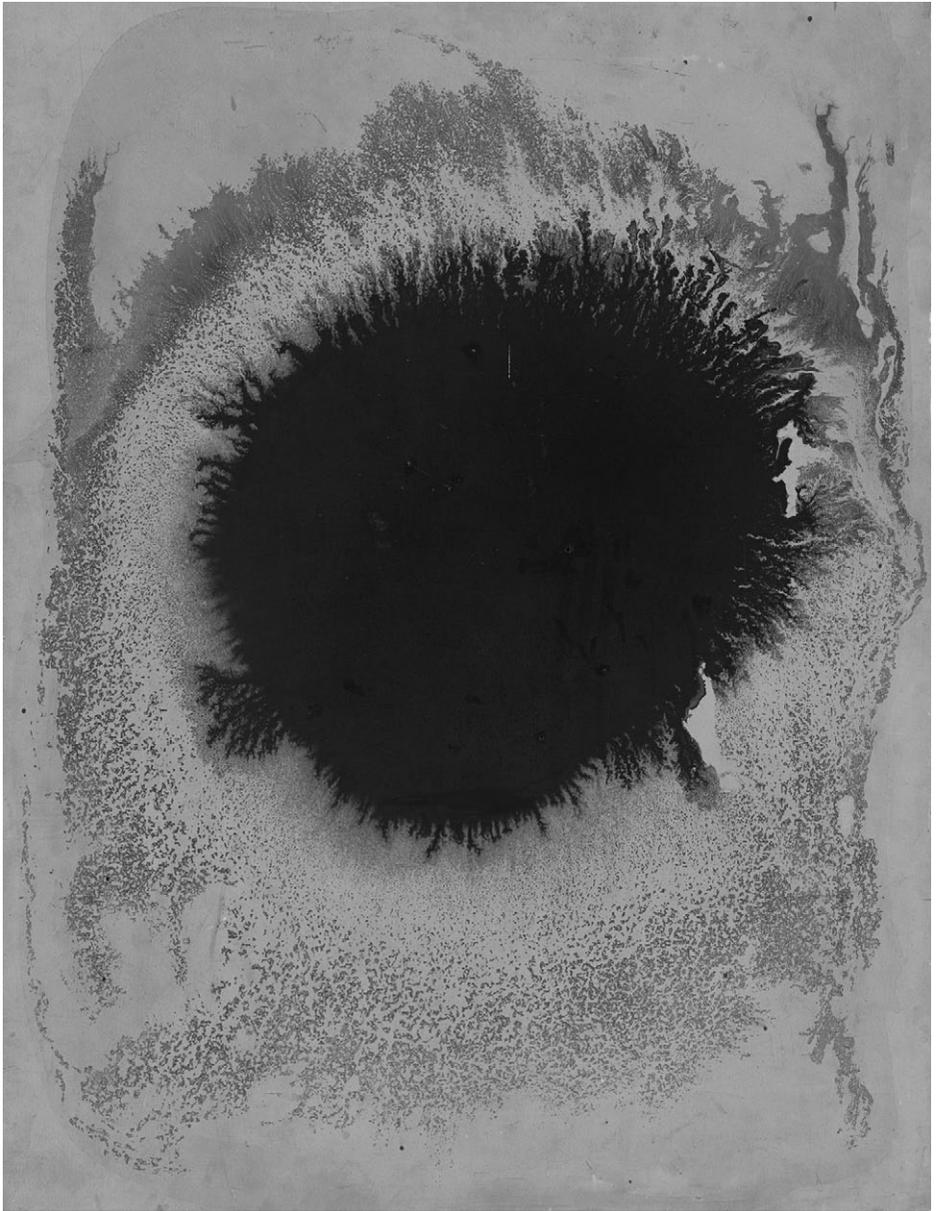


Fig 28. George Maciunas, *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Painting*, 1961. Ink on paperboard on wood. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2343.2008. By permission of Billie J. Maciunas, PhD.

thoughtfully and in earnest (fig. 29). Printed in an elongated vertical format in stark black and white, it featured decontextualized painterly marks and the artist's signature as graphic motifs, thus strongly recalling the invitation card design for Jackson Pollock's influential 1950 solo exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery. The announcement also included an artist's statement, whose language resonated with some of Brecht's own in "Chance-Imagery." (The two artists were not yet in dialogue and Brecht's essay was yet to be published, but Maciunas may have seen Brecht's paintings in a 1959 solo exhibition at Reuben Gallery in New York.) Maciunas's evocative text is worth reproducing in full:

WORKS OF G. MACIUNAS AT AG. 925 MADISON AV. MAY 8 TO 21, DAILY: 1-5

Being non illusional but realistic, my graphic expression or form becomes one and same as my state of consciousness and intuitive perception or awareness of the microcosmos and its process of becoming. The ink dropping into puddle as a mode of expression, by being one and same as the content, resolves itself within its own body, existing only for its own quality of energy, process, movement, efflux and metamorphosis. It becomes thus the perceived reality itself. The hydraulic-chemical behaviour of fluids and microparticles of the medium in motion creates a new micro-geography undergoing constant and continuing metamorphosis, diffusion and efflux until the fluid evaporates arresting thus the movement in its cadence. This reality therefore must be perceived and appreciated firstly as a kinetic reality requiring awareness of its process of becoming into the arrested stage, and secondly as a micro-cosmic reality requiring viewing at a greatly reduced distance and preferably with the help of magnifying glass. Only then will the experience of the new kinetic microcosmos acquire concreteness.

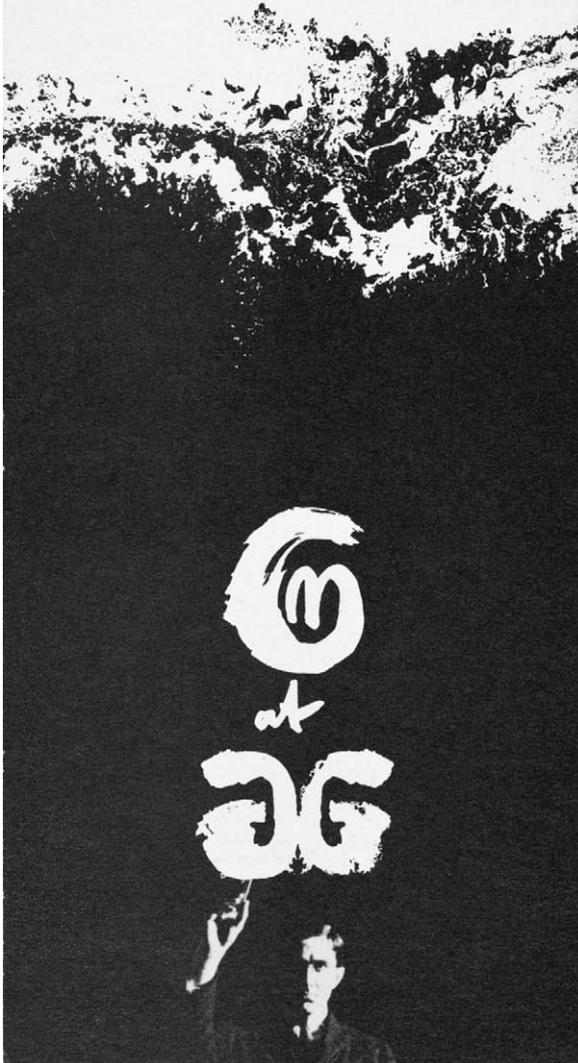


Fig 29. George Maciunas, *Works of G. Maciunas at AG*, exhibition announcement, 1961. Jean Brown papers, 1916–1995 (bulk 1958–1985), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (890164 and 2016.M.14). By permission of Billie J. Maciunas, PhD.

Being non illusional but realistic, my graphic expression or form becomes one and the same as my state of consciousness and intuitive perception or awareness of the microcosmos and its process of becoming. The ink dropping into puddle as a mode of expression, by being one and same as the content, resolves itself within its own body, existing only for its own quality of energy, process, movement, efflux and metamorphosis. It becomes thus the perceived reality itself. The hydraulic-chemical behaviour of fluids and microparticles of the medium in motion creates a new micro-geography undergoing constant and continuing metamorphosis, diffusion and efflux until the fluid evaporates arresting thus the movement in its cadence. This reality therefore must be perceived and appreciated firstly as a kinetic reality requiring awareness of its process of becoming into the arrested stage, and secondly as a microcosmic reality requiring viewing at a greatly reduced distance and preferably with the help of magnifying glass. Only then will the experience of the new kinetic microcosmos acquire concreteness.⁵⁶

Maciunas's hydrokinetic-osmotic procedure, which aimed to capture visible, concrete truths about the physics of liquids, closed the gap between abstraction and figuration inasmuch as it was a mode of both automorphic abstraction and non-illusionistic realism. Claiming to abandon a position of egocentric mastery, Maciunas figures the painter's role as instigator of a process of dynamic, automatic composition. Like Brecht in the face of his *Chance Paintings*, Maciunas plays attendant witness to paint's matter-function, maintaining an observant, sympathetic perceptual state in the presence of form's self-unfolding. Another important and early expression of Fluxus's immanent formalism, the final composition of Maciunas's painterly experiments was determined ultimately by the natural interactions of materials alone.

Surveying other AG Gallery announcements designed by Maciunas, one notices that his *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings* related visually to paintings chosen to represent the practices of artists Don Shepherd and Alfonsas Dargis, whose solo exhibitions bookended Maciunas's own. Together, the announcements for the three shows represent different approaches to an aesthetics of staining by means of diluted pigment, often applied to surfaces already saturated. Maciunas's discursive framing of the aesthetics of the stain evinced a proto-postmodern, neo-avant-garde direction of thought. In a text written to promote Shepherd's exhibition, Maciunas's language departs significantly from that of the artist. In reference to his own paintings, bearing titles like *Archaic Vibrations* and *Totem of the Elements*, Shepherd describes his painterly marks in language typical of the abstract expressionist moment: "an alphabet of personal symbols" meant to represent "universal" objects.⁵⁷ By contrast, Maciunas's account of the same work airs ideas that would soon be tested in the production of his *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings*. He

describes Shepherd's practice as an immanentist approach to abstraction wherein form derives from natural physical processes rather than the artist's conscious or even unconscious direction of the material. Of note, Maciunas deploys the word *flux* twice to reference both the flow of paint and the indeterminate rhythms of nature:

The works of Don Shepherd embody the true monomorphic realism-concretism as opposed to biomorphic illusionism, since his intuitive-mystic perception of animate life or *flux* in the inanimate world becomes one and the same with the expression and form of a growing surface alive with animation. The growth starts from surface cell to larger animated cell clusters and finally into fantastic organic shapes which acquire an awesome animalistic or rather enlarged microbic presence. This animate presence is effected not by any illusionistic or artificial forms or patterns independent of the medium but by the *flux* of the very water color medium itself.⁵⁸

Together, these two statements by Maciunas developed prototypical language for the arguments he would make in the signal essay "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art," penned in the wake of AG's closure and his relocation to Wiesbaden, Germany, where he would narrow his focus on advancing an explicitly Fluxus program.⁵⁹ In this manifesto-like text, presented as part of Maciunas's first public appearance in Germany, the Fluxus founder identifies neo-dada tendencies primarily with "concretism," which he opposes to intentionality and all forms of artifice, especially the "artificial abstraction of illusionism." In Maciunas's notion of aesthetic concretism, there is absolute unity of form and content; the work's composition or aesthetic has a "close affinity" with its material substrate, whose sensory effects do not mask the procedure or materials used in its making. For example, he lauds the sound of human speech or eating over the affectation of a sung note. Concretism's purest forms, he argues, lie in "non-art, anti-art, nature, reality." Maciunas singles out indeterminate compositions for their ability to best capture the authentic, unpredictable operations of nature, making of the artwork an "automatic machine" by which nature "can complete the art-form, effectively and independently of the artist-composer." "Thus," he continues, "the primary contribution of a truly concrete artist consists in creating a *concept* or a *method* by which form can be created independently of him." Echoing Brecht's paean in "Chance-Imagery" to meadow grasses, river stones, Alpine peaks, iris petals, and the patterns observed on the side of a passing truck, Maciunas ends his case for concretism by arguing that rainfall, a sneeze, the flight of a butterfly, the babble of a crowd, or the movements of microbes "are as beautiful and as worth to be aware of as art itself."⁶⁰ All that is needed to appreciate them is the proper conceptual or perceptual frame.

As something of a complement to Maciunas's *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings*, Yoko Ono's *Instruction Paintings* were shown in late July on the invitation of Maciunas, just before AG Gallery's folding. In this series, panels of raw canvas stained with Sumi ink provided the frame, support, or backdrop for the observation of natural phenomena including wind, smoke, cast shadows, the evening light, a growing plant, the accretion of dust and dirt, and dripping water. Ono's *Waterdrop Painting*, for example, installed in two versions on the floor, soaked up droplets of water that fell from a bottle hanging above. By introducing simple instructions that implied the works could be executed by someone other than the artist, Ono further advanced, via the language and materials of painting, Maciunas's notion of the artwork as a virtually authorless automatic machine.

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM IN FLUX

Despite the claims of Young and Flynt that Maciunas "had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the avant-garde," we can locate the kernel of Maciunas's neo-dadaist notion of aesthetic concretism in his studies of abstract expressionist painting conducted at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts in the late 1950s, a time when Maciunas still held dreams of becoming an art history professor. There, he wrote a paper for Africanist Robert Goldwater (then director of the Museum of Primitive Art) titled "Development of Western Abstract Chirography as a Product of Far Eastern Mentality."⁶¹ This roughly composed bit of student work provides evidence of a young Maciunas awake to the fine differences to be read across the gesture paintings of Hans Hartung, Georges Mathieu, Pierre Soulages, Wols, Mark Tobey, Adolf Gottlieb, and Jackson Pollock. The paper introduces the term "abstract chirography" (more simply, abstract handwriting) to typologize the work of abstract expressionist and Informel painters and proceeds to elaborate an alternative lineage for this work apart from Surrealist automatism. Maciunas relates abstract chirography to Zen philosophy and the calligraphic painting traditions of Japan and China, in which, working with ink and brush, one attempts to reach (in his words) a "state of intuitive perception of a timeless universe." With one's focus "in the tip of the brush," he writes, the executed brushstroke "resolves itself within its own body," existing "not to create plastic form but for its own quality of process, of movement, of gesture, of touch and stroke." In the authorial model he describes, expression and perception become coextensive within the painterly process. Rather than unleashing unconscious forces as a way of intensifying one's sense of egoic power, the goal is to projectively identify with natural forces to the point of self-dissolution—"dissolving one's nature into that of the universe."⁶² Maciunas wrote these words in 1959; his seizing upon the word *flux* to stand for his belief that the dynamic,

indeterminate qualities of everyday life deserved aesthetic appreciation as art was not far away.

Maciunas was not alone in casting gesture painting in Zen and immanentist terms. The scholarship of Catherine Craft and Valerie Hellstein reminds us that the historical reception of abstract expressionism in the United States, often cast in polarized terms between Clement Greenberg's theory of disembodied opticality and Harold Rosenberg's notion of action, has obscured the reality that discourse among artists at the time was cross-pollinated with anti-subjectivist ideas owed to East Asian spiritual traditions, vitalist philosophy, technological innovations, and even Dada—whether through John Cage's lectures at The Club, Robert Motherwell's publication of *The Dada Painters and Poets* in 1951, the wondrous yet threatening imaginary of nuclear fission, or the US reception of Zen.⁶³ In addition, there was a vibrant conversation between abstract painting and new music unfolding in Europe, particularly in West Germany, where proto-Fluxus concerts were staged literally against the backdrop of French and German Informel canvases at Jean-Pierre Wilhelm's Galerie 22 in Düsseldorf and painter Mary Bauermeister's atelier in Cologne. These figures recognized the resonance between the lyrical abstraction that had been recently canonized at *documenta* in 1959 and the musical indeterminacy promoted by Cage and further developed by Fluxus.

Motherwell's long, collage-like introduction to *The Dada Painters and Poets*, an edited volume of Dada primary materials, is particularly illuminating on these points. Meditating upon the significance of chance procedures in art, he gives the last lines over to Henri Focillon, quoting long passages from the art historian's essay "In Praise of Hands," which had recently appeared in English for the first time as an addendum to the second edition of *The Life of Forms in Art*.⁶⁴ For Motherwell, borrowing the words of Focillon, "accident is an unknown form of life, the meeting of obscure forces and clairvoyant design." Furthermore, Focillon writes:

[The artist] is a prestidigitator (I like this long, old word) who takes advantage of his own errors and of his faulty strokes to perform tricks with them; he never has more grace than when he makes a virtue of his own clumsiness. This excess of ink flowing capriciously in thin black rivulets, this insect's promenade across a brand-new sketch, this line deflected by a sudden jar, this drop of water diluting a contour—all these are the sudden invasion of the unexpected in a world where it has a right to its proper place, and where everything seems to be busy welcoming it.⁶⁵

Focillon's words were instructive for the collage practice Motherwell was engaged in during the 1950s, which distantly evoked the work of Kurt Schwitters and Jean Arp. But these words would become even more relevant to Motherwell's *Lyrical Suite* to come. In a flurry of activity in spring 1965, Motherwell produced nearly

six hundred pages of calligraphic ink-stain drawings on Japanese rice paper laid on the floor. “Each picture would change before my eyes after I had finished working it,” he recounted:

Because of the technical process of spreading and drying after I had ended my participation, the pictures literally continued to paint themselves as the ink spread in collaboration with the paper. . . . Part of the experience was like those speeded up botany films that show you months’ growth in several minutes, the bud becoming a flower.⁶⁶

Despite their shared revelations, Motherwell may have known nothing of Maciunas and Brecht’s similar interests and experiments, his closest confidantes being fellow painter (and his partner) Helen Frankenthaler and sculptor David Smith, whose untimely passing halted Motherwell’s work on *Lyric Suite*. In any case, by 1965, Maciunas and Brecht had already moved on from the painted canvas and page to explore drips and other kinds of immanent form in varying media beyond painting.

At the turn of the 1960s, Maciunas and Brecht were two artists alive to the aesthetic and historical import of both Dada and abstract expressionism, keenly aware of and interested in those movements’ common ground. Next to Brecht’s analysis in “Chance-Imagery” of Pollock, he drew heavily from Motherwell’s Dada anthology. And certainly Maciunas’s *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings*, made entirely of drops “diluting a contour” (to borrow Focillon’s language), were not as impulsive or poorly thought out as his one-time assistant, Jonas Mekas, believed. Even Maciunas’s attraction to the word *flux* was likely not *sui generis*. Included in the Whitney Museum’s 1957 *Annual Exhibition* was a painting by Alfonso Ossorio titled *Fluxus* (1956, plate 3).⁶⁷ Ossorio was a close friend and supporter of Pollock, introducing him to Zen, and Ossorio also had a hand in bringing the aforementioned Gutai exhibition to Martha Jackson Gallery in 1958.⁶⁸ Whether or not Maciunas knew of or ever saw Ossorio’s canvas (and it is more than likely that he did), it is worth dwelling on as emblematic of the vein of abstract expressionism that most captured Maciunas’s fascination. The surface of *Fluxus* is bewildering—a molten skin of black, white, brown, yellow, green, and blue paint, applied wet-on-wet and then pushed around, stretched, and abraded in every conceivable direction. The choreography of the artist’s touch is too hard to mentally reconstruct; it seems more an anonymous evocation of raw energy. Reflecting on this phase of his practice, before he too began to work in a more explicitly neo-dada direction, Ossorio said, “What is called the drip period was an attempt really to incarnate energy in a visual form, to have a concept of what energy means.”⁶⁹ Ossorio had already evolved an evocative liquid imaginary in his writing on Pollock’s drips, describing them in a 1951 text in terms of “ocean’s tides” and “the bursting of a bubble.” “His

forms and textures germinate, climax, and decline, coalesce and dissolve across the canvas,” Ossorio wrote. “Forms and images dissolve and re-form into new organisms.”⁷⁰

By now I hope to have convincingly reconstructed an understanding of the drip that can account for the overlap between modernist painting and the historically adjacent yet radically mongrel intermedia work of Fluxus, a motley collective of artists, most of whom did not make paintings. If Fluxus artists’ engagement with abstract expressionist aesthetics has been sidelined in the art-historical record, this is no doubt due to a corresponding blindness to the circulation of Dada and neo-dada ideas and strategies within mid-century modernism. Dick Higgins registered his suspicion about this in 1972:

One thing above all was foreign to Fluxus works: personal intrusion on the part of the artist. In fact there was almost a cult among the Fluxus people—or, more properly, a fetish, carried far beyond any rational or explainable level—which idealized the most direct relationship with “reality,” specifically objective reality. The lives of objects, their histories and events were considered somehow more realistic than any conceivable personal intrusion on them.

Many would see this as a reaction against what is considered the personal, intuitive nature of Abstract Expressionism, which was, as a movement and as a whole, certainly a near-opposite of Fluxus. But I think this is because Abstract Expressionism is not far enough behind us to be seen clearly. Certainly Jackson Pollock’s manifesto-statement in which he describes the only time he gets “a mess” as being when he gets in the way of the life of his materials, certainly this attitude is actually very close to Fluxus. And most of the Abstract Expressionists of the late 1950’s spoke more about “layering,” “torque,” and “linear configuration” than about their relationships to them. I would rather regard the impersonality of Fluxus work not as a reaction against this element of Abstract Expressionism, but as an extension of it (perhaps the only point in common between them) and as a translation of it into different terms and formats, more expressive of the attitude of the period than unique to Fluxus.⁷¹

Indeed, while I have chosen to focus on Brecht and Maciunas here, one could extend the present argument to include other Fluxus artists. Nam June Paik’s performance *Zen for Head* recast La Monte Young’s instruction “Draw a straight line and follow it” as a painted mark slashed out at floor level with the artist’s head, hands, and necktie, a gesture that responded to abstract expressionism with a desublimated, task-based, quasi-automatic, nearly blind act. Tomas Schmit’s *Zyklus for Water-Pails* situates the performer inside a ring of between ten and thirty vessels, pouring a containerful of water from one to the next—dripping and dripping—until the liquid disappears through evaporation or spilling (see



Fig 30. Mieko Shiomi, *Water Music* from *Fluxkit*, 1965. Glass bottle with plastic dropper and offset label. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2182.2008.16. Courtesy of Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi.

fig. 11). Mieko Shiomi's *Water Music*, a performative object produced in a Fluxus edition, is a water-filled glass bottle whose label bears the instruction: "1. give the water still form 2. let the water lose its still form." A second, variant printing of the label, attributable to Maciunas, implicitly connects Shiomi's liquid event with his own *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings*, instructing (or merely observing): "let the water loose *it's still form*" (fig. 30).⁷²

By way of conclusion, I want to return to the invitation Maciunas designed for his exhibition of *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings* at AG Gallery and draw our attention to his careful self-styling there. A marbled pattern of ink and water divides the card into two zones of white over black. In the dark lower half, Maciunas's image emerges from the blackness, grasping an implement in his raised right hand as if in the midst of completing the AG logo. Indeed, he may be executing a brushstroke, but the implement also looks as if it could be his finger simply pointing to

or delicately resting on the marked surface, suggesting that his pose is at least as feeling and perceptual as it is expressive and autographic. The image of the artist's hand is one that not only delivers an indexical signature but is a hand that reaches beyond the self to connect with the world as it already is, in a gesture of reciprocal touch. This was only the first of many iconic pointing fingers that appear frequently across Maciunas's designs. Soon the manicule would become a recurring emblem in Fluxus publications, a token not just of Maciunas's prodding humor but also of Fluxus's investment in transpersonal identification and curious modes of perception, particularly that of physical touch.

As we have seen, Brecht and Maciunas's early work and thinking around painting reimagined the abstract expressionist gesture through a matrix of process and indeterminacy, with careful attention to the physical properties and formal potential of liquid materials. In the ensuing years, this model of immanent formalism would open crucial pathways for some of the most profound transformations in the nature of artistic form to occur in the 1960s. By the time of the emergence of post-minimalism and process art late in the decade, form became for many artists a function of notated and delegated processes and procedures, and materials were chosen not only for what they looked like but for their automorphic potential—their innate and indeterminate propensity to produce compelling aesthetic form through automatic, non-anthropogenic means. Such concerns would be worked through with an increasingly broad range of materials beyond paint and canvas, although these efforts can be traced in fundamental ways to the concerns of mid-century modernist painting and their reception by the Fluxus milieu.

Maciunas's dalliance with painting, like Brecht's, was brief. Following his departure to Europe in late 1961, he ceased painting altogether. But it remained in the back of his mind. In a publication of 1969, he proposed (but never realized, it seems) what would have been a spectacular return to his hydrokinetic-osmotic procedure, a kind of live film called *Kinetics Nos. 1 to 3*, produced by projecting light through a hollow slide filled with water—and a drop of India ink.⁷³

TWO EXERCISES

Consider an object. Call what is not the object "other."

EXERCISE: Add to the object, from the "other," another object, to form a new object and a new "other."
Repeat until there is no more "other."

EXERCISE: Take a part from the object and add it to the "other," to form a new object and a new "other."
Repeat until there is no more object.

Fall, 1961

EXERCISE

Determine the center of an object or event.

Determine the center more accurately.

Repeat, until further accuracy is impossible.

THREE

George Brecht and the Notational Object

The event score format, which became the first common language of Fluxus, was from its origins imbricated in transformative perceptual encounters with the material world and its objects. As recounted in this book's prelude, primary innovator George Brecht's first explicitly named "event," *Motor Vehicle Sundown (Event)* of early 1960, arose from the artist's elevated consciousness of a quite banal situation: standing behind his Ford station wagon, Brecht observed its engine idling and turn signal blinking. Being a phenomenon first discovered or noticed, this found composition was then translated into a carefully worded text piece so that it could be deliberately rematerialized in performance or encountered again by chance as a readymade event.

Fig 31. George Brecht, *Two Exercises*, 1961, and *Exercise*, 1963. Event score cards included in *Water Yam* (deluxe box, 1963). Jean Brown papers, 1916–1995 (bulk 1958–1985), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (890164 and 2016.M.14). © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

However, the first score that Brecht signed and dated in his notebooks, and the first to be typewritten on a card (thus establishing the material parameters of the dozens of event scores to come), was *Time-Table Music* of July 1959, written while Brecht was enrolled in John Cage's experimental composition class at the New School.¹ It was also one of Brecht's first text scores to circulate in print, appearing in a 1961 issue of the American poetry magazine *Kulchur*.² The score instructs performers to go to a train station and refer to posted arrival and departure times as indications for when and how long sounds should be made, thus appropriating the quantified vectors of travel as a "found notation" (in Brecht's words) for making music.³ The score outlines a basic compositional structure but requires the ultimate audible and visible musical form to be derived immanently from the performance environment. Brecht returned to the idea in April 1961 to create the slightly differently titled *Time-Table Event*, in which a train station timetable determines the length of the piece but not precisely when the sounds are to occur within it. Together, the "music" and "event" versions of Brecht's timetable compositions demarcate a shift in the performer's role from one who dutifully reads and mechanically responds to tabulated information, to a relatively free agent confronted with an open time frame akin to Cage's 4'33", in which any number of events may be performed or simply observed.

Written across the years 1959 to 1961, Brecht's two timetable scores bookended the progression of his compositions in this period toward minimalist extremes of language that radically expanded the scores' hermeneutic potential and coincided with his position that the scores need not be publicly staged. Simply to observe objective phenomena that one could mentally relate to a given score was enough to constitute a legitimate realization. For example, Brecht's *Word Event* of April 1961 consisted of a single, bulleted word, "EXIT"—a word, idea, object, or action relatable to train stations and infinite other contexts besides. Although *Word Event* became a favored means of closing out Fluxus concerts and was performed at least half a dozen times in the first European tour (often appearing scrawled on a chalkboard or handheld sign), for Brecht, simply noticing a preexisting exit sign constituted a fitful realization. Due to its ambiguity and openness, and thus its broad adaptability, *Word Event* was a remarkable encapsulation of the event score's dialectical operation of shuttling between the formal registers of the abstract (language and ideas), with its propensity for mobility, and the concrete (real objects, situations, time, and space).

Brecht continued to write event scores regularly until October 1963, when his compositions virtually ceased.⁴ Then, in the summer of 1965, after compiling a chronological list of all the event scores he had ever written, he drafted in his notebook a reflective meta-composition titled *Event Score* (fig. 32).⁵ The work's title suggests it could be taken as an emblematic summary of the entire genre, here distilled as a tool for framing perception-altering encounters with the objects

EVENT SCORE

Arrange or discover an event score and then realize it.

- If the score is arrived at while awake, then make a dream realization, that is, note all dreams until a realization of the score has been discovered in a dream.
- If the score is dreamed, then make a waking realization, that is, search in your waking life for whatever dream or part of a dream constitutes the score.

George Brecht

Fig 32. George Brecht, *Event Score*, 1965. Event score card. Jean Brown papers, 1916–1995 (bulk 1958–1985), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (890164 and 2016.M.14). © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

and events of everyday life. Brecht was suspicious of the nostalgic, melancholic affect of much Surrealist art (like the work of Joseph Cornell, whom he nevertheless admired), and was typically not one to fixate on dreams. But if the dream state forms half the activity described in *Event Score*, it is meant to evoke more than the interchange of subject and object, self and other, thought and world, consciousness and unconscious that Brecht sought to relate to the operations of event scores. More to the point, *Event Score* highlights the format's function as a medium, akin to dreams, through which the self is made to confront, reflect upon, and process its own operations of thought. Additionally, *Event Score* emphasized that the event was not only of conceptual significance. It entailed a connection to the real through the arrangement or discovery of material phenomena within the flow of experience as it unfolds in physical time-space. The event score summarized here instates a dialectical practice that understands artistic form as always moving between the registers of what is abstract and knowable and what is concretely visible and tangible. It sets into motion a continual revelation of the structural operations of cognition to the performer-beholder him- or herself. These qualities recall event scores' foundation in graphic notation and therefore their affinity with diagrams (as I argued in chapter 1), which likewise occupy an interstitial domain, trafficking between the ideal and material, symbolic and literal, general and specific, abstract and concrete.

Before *Event Score*, many of Brecht's compositions had metaphorized the traffic between the score as abstract idea and concrete event. The scores *Two Exercises* (fall 1961) and *Exercise* (April 1963) set up a transit between one object or object-category and the next, between objecthood and objectlessness, form

and formlessness, limit and limitlessness (fig. 31). In their emphatic and “unapologetic *in-betweenness*,” as Julia Robinson has put it, such compositions enact a self-reflexive meditation on their form-giving capacities.⁶ In an important move away from the model of Cagean indeterminacy, Brecht’s event scores operate not by means of mechanical, blindly algorithmic chance operations but via the slippages and elasticities of thought as it plays with and between language and our perceptual encounters with the world. As an artwork, the event score successfully evades material determinism on the part of the event while disrupting the byways of conventional thought on the part of the subject. *Exercise*, for example, dramatizes aesthetic form not as a given but as a perceptual encounter, a structural or structuring process. This score was a distillation of Brecht’s interest in the liminal, which his events sought to make visible. It reformulated some of the questions he was posing to himself in his notebook: “If art were not in form, it could be (life) instead of art . . . Can art not be in form and still be art?”⁷ Specifically regarding *Exercise*, Brecht has said, “I don’t think it would be correct to say that there are no objects or that Fluxus wanted to destroy them. The *Exercise* only shows how one can change one’s attitude to the concept of the object.”⁸ This score in fact returns to some fundamental preoccupations of the avant-garde: whether and how the boundary between art and life might be crossed or eliminated, and whether and how one can de-link the definition of art from the reification of objects and their isolation from the indeterminate flux of everyday experience. Brecht’s scored exercises test whether one might be able to recognize Marcel Duchamp’s urinal as art, so to speak, while leaving it in the shop window rather than bringing it into the museum.

In this chapter, an examination of Brecht’s participation in Cage’s courses of 1958–1959, coincident with the artist’s first solo show in New York, offers an exemplary view onto the co-development in his practice of scores that utilize an object-like quality of language and arrangements of everyday objects that suggest score-like qualities of enaction. In regard to the first development, I read the generic, widely interpretable language of Brecht’s notations, characteristic of Fluxus event scores in general, in relation to Dick Higgins’s advocacy of “blank images” and “exemplativism” over other emerging alternative object models of the time, such as the highly specific, geometric “blank forms” common to minimalism. In regard to the second development, I attribute the interactive, performative qualities of Fluxus objects such as Brecht’s to the abiding logic of the score even when one may not be explicitly present. Fluxus’s “notational objects,” as I call them, advanced the logic of the Dada readymade by refusing to divorce the everyday object from its original functions. Brecht’s early objects of this nature are a crucial progenitor for the hundreds of Fluxboxes published by George Maciunas and other Fluxus affiliates over the course of the 1960s.

Brecht’s early work established a foundational model for the Fluxus attitude

toward the artwork as object. It forged an interdependent relationship between score and object, in which the abstract concept proposed in the score was a means of referring the work, again and again, to concrete realizations. While the event score points to objects in real time-space, the objects indexed to a given realization are interchangeable placeholders for any number of other, equally adequate objects. By means of the event score's incredible flexibility, Fluxus artists developed individual practices that were deeply material and yet highly adaptable and changeable. The result was the paradoxical centrality of objects to a model of artistic practice that also rendered them highly provisional due to a radical reconceptualization of the work of art as allographic—existing in numerous copies made, circulated, and even transformed apart from the hand of the artist-maker and his or her taste and powers of authentication.

Superficially, Brecht's move away from Cage and toward the work that brought him into the center of Fluxus looks like a move away from musical composition and performance to the kinds of dematerialized linguistic propositions that we now recognize as conceptual art. But on this transformation in his practice, Brecht explained, "What we have here is a research in music, turned into a research in objects."⁹ How can the Fluxus event score be considered a research in objects? Following this book's prior chapters, which focused on the origins of Fluxus practices in both experimental notation and abstract painting of the 1950s, the present chapter attends to the material dimensions of Brecht's pre-Fluxus and early Fluxus activities with special attention to the fundamental interrelation between his event scores and interactive assemblages, a crucial model for Fluxboxes, which I go on to discuss in chapter 4. Through the example of Brecht, I consider how Fluxus's ostensibly "anti-art, anti-object" notational practices were always deeply engaged with thinking about objects and their relations.¹⁰

Fluxus attitudes toward the object formed one current of a rising neo-avant-garde tide in the 1960s that included numerous artists associated with neo-dada, Pop, New Realism, and minimalism. Across these multifarious practices, artists challenged the integrity and value of the artwork as an object, if not the category of art itself, by incorporating readymade, everyday, commercial, popular, banal, cast-off, and refuse objects in their work. What made the work of Fluxus artists unique in this milieu was their objects' integration with a notation-based, iterative, performative, and participatory practice that could never be fully reconciled with the exhibition protocol of museums and galleries. Fluxus objects materialized and rendered mass-distributable certain qualities of Fluxus performance: a reliance on readymade props and gestures, an embrace of chance and indeterminacy, and concentration on concrete experience of processes unfolding through time. Liz Kotz has observed that neo-avant-garde practices of the 1960s were broadly defined by two trajectories of the object/edition/store and performance/instruction/

score.¹¹ In the case of Fluxus, one could further argue that the collective's two central formats, the event score and multiple, were not discrete but always deeply interlinked. The material production of Fluxus entailed a dialectical meeting of scores and objects determined to prohibit not only the fetishization of the artwork as a unique, single-authored entity, but also the dissipation of the work into a completely abstract, conceptual procedure divorced from concrete experience and tangible materiality. The term "object" in Fluxus thus corresponded both to a category of material thing (typically the readymade) and to a perceptual operation (guided by the event score) in which observable phenomena are reified by the will of attentive consciousness. This unique understanding of the object circled ever back to Brecht's notion of the event.

THE EVENT-LIKE NATURE OF OBJECTS

Prefiguring the aim of Brecht's event scores to reframe subject-object relations, the artist's earliest works composed for Cage's class employed everyday objects chosen for their temporally inflected, phenomenal qualities. They were typically manipulable, functional objects, or had the capacity to produce sound or light. Remarkably for a course of study centered on composition and taught by a professional composer of music, the pieces Brecht wrote for the piano, or any musical instrument for that matter, were few. In his notebook of July 1958, Brecht drew up a list of "things that light will go through," including glass, plastic sheeting, screens, cellophane, cloth, nylon, foil punctured with pinholes, gauze, and string glued on a frame.¹² Items were chosen not only for their material features, but for their common familiarity and use. Brecht utilized myriad other handy, quotidian thingamajigs of the like that would later feature in Fluxus multiples, which we also find listed in his notebooks. For example: milk bottles with pebbles inside, colored lights, confetti, sandpaper, ping-pong balls, toothpicks, matches, sand, water, birthday candles, playing cards, toy instruments, whistles, combs, and brushes. As Michael Nyman has explained, underscoring the practical nature of Brecht and his classmates' choice of objects, "Toys figured largely in the New School class, since they could be played without any specialized training, produced unhackneyed sounds, and could be picked up at dime stores on the way to class."¹³

Brecht's early compositions in this context engaged the entire classroom performance space, enveloping the audience and incorporating the extent and limits of a given site. In a performance of his *Burette Music* (1959), a precursor to the more well-known *Drip Music (Drip Event)* (1959–1962), scientific burettes (lab instruments used to dispense precise amounts of liquid) were positioned around the darkened room in relation to the pattern of the floor tiles and set to drip "very slowly."¹⁴ A realization of his score *Candle-Piece for Radios* similarly

entailed arraying the work's primary sound-source (radios) randomly about the room along with birthday candles, which provided illumination as performers took their directions from stacks of instruction cards. The candles concomitantly set the time-length for the piece, which ended when they went out on their own. Brecht's pieces commonly concluded at the extinguishing of a candle or the completion of a final task indicated by a limited number of cue cards. "The problem that I'd posed for myself with the *Candle-Piece for Radios*," Brecht explained, and as I related in chapter 2, "was that the duration of the piece shouldn't be set beforehand but that it should come from within the piece itself."¹⁵

Brecht's desire to derive form in his works immanently from the context or materials of their execution carried forth concerns he had previously attempted to work through via painting, before his close engagement with Cage. In Cage's class, he began to explore the immanent temporality of found objects in ways that recalled Cage's earlier turn to idiophonic percussion instruments in the composer's pursuit of more "natural" sounds, wherein the time-length of a tone was contingent on the resonant materiality of the instrument as a physical object. In preparation for the premiere of Cage's *Quartet* (1935), for example, a composition for unspecified percussion instruments, the composer and his co-performers adopted tables, books, chairs, pots, and pans, as well as finds from local junkyards and lumberyards including automobile brake-drums, pipe, steel rings, and wooden blocks.¹⁶ If at that time Cage had yet to formulate his notion of indeterminacy, his choice to give over the ultimate acoustic features of the work to an array of provisional instruments was an early gesture toward the idea, given that his materials were apt to change with every performance. His position on this matter was further developed in a 1948 lecture, "Defense of Satie," delivered at Black Mountain College, in which Cage presented a revolutionary definition of music that understood structure, form, method, and materials as four elements that coextensively organize and define a musical work. Form, Cage proposed at the time, arises immanently and organically out of the interplay of method and materials, with each contributing equally to the work's aesthetic effect.¹⁷

In the years following *Quartet*, Cage had been preoccupied with perfecting the prepared piano, which he devised in 1938 for practical reasons of space, having been asked to compose a piece of dance music for a performance space with room only for a piano. His masterwork for prepared piano, *Sonatas and Interludes*, premiered at Black Mountain College the same year as his Satie lecture. For this work, a battery of objects was inserted among the strings of the piano—including weather stripping, rubber, screws, bolts, metal washers and nuts, pennies, wood, bamboo, and pencil erasers—in order to alter and thereby expand the piano's range of sound. Cage's prepared piano was a logical extension of the "string piano" techniques employed by Henry Cowell beginning in the 1920s, in which Cowell extended his body over the keyboard and reached into the piano's body in

order to pluck, flick, scrape, and sweep his hands over the strings. By the time of *Sonatas and Interludes*, Cage's prepared-piano technique was so sophisticated that it entailed a remarkable, proto-Fluxus kit containing the prescribed nuts, bolts, and material scraps along with precise instructions as to where in the piano they should be placed.

Cage's works for prepared piano not only expanded the sonic possibilities of a timeworn instrument. They also reconceptualized the piano as a whole object to be manipulated on any available surface rather than metonymically identifying it with the keyboard. Attention was paid not only to the piano's internal strings; some works instructed the performer to slam the keyboard lid shut or strike the underside of the piano body. Cage's fresh approach to the piano as a fully manipulable object opened the way for increasingly theatrical compositions incorporating everyday items. *Water Music* (1952, whose score I highlight in chapter 1 due to its graphic qualities) incorporated alongside the piano a radio, whistles, various containers, a wooden stick, and a deck of cards to be dealt into the piano body, sounding its strings.

At stake in these works was a shift in attitude toward the conventional use-value of objects, whether they belonged to the traditional repertoire of musical performance or not. Both sides of this dialectical outlook—in which the musical instrument becomes a mere object and a mere object is adopted as a musical instrument—were brought together at the first Fluxus concert in Wiesbaden in 1962. In his *Variations for Double-Bass* (1961–1962), Benjamin Patterson elicited from his instrument sounds made with the aid of clothespins, gauze, a duster, and an air pump. Other pieces by Higgins, Maciunas, and Emmett Williams utilized no traditional instruments at all but rather simple, ready-to-hand objects like hats, whistles, scissors, rocks, and wooden blocks. The score for Philip Corner's *Piano Activities* (1962) famously performed there catalogues all conceivable manners of engaging the piano, from the orthodox to the most experimental, playful, and destructive. Performers are instructed to pluck, scratch, rub, and drop objects on the strings and to drag over and strike all parts of the piano with foreign objects. For the Wiesbaden performers confronted with the secondhand grand piano Maciunas had purchased expressly for the performance, their props included a teakettle, brick, hammer, and shoes (see fig. 12). Perhaps precisely because Corner was not present, the performance ended in the piano's destruction, becoming among the most reported-on events of the festival and featuring in a sensational German TV news program.¹⁸ *Piano Activities* might not have been much of an innovation on the tactics that Cage had already brought to his prepared-piano pieces if not for a crucial difference: Corner's piece is written for any number of pianists and stresses the collaborative and evolving nature of the interrelations between the performers, piano, and additional props. The score instructs performers to alternate between restraint and extremity, action and inaction, ignoring and

relating to each other as they “enhance, and destroy, or transform their actions.”¹⁹ In filmic documentation of the Wiesbaden performance, we can indeed observe the performers’ moment-by-moment negotiations, as, for example, Higgins tries to modulate with a hand signal Patterson’s efforts at pounding the piano brutally with a hammer.²⁰ *Piano Activities* effectively recast music wholesale as an exercise in collective and intersubjective subject-object relations, pointing to the ways Fluxus performances would function, the role of objects within them, and the relationships they would model.

BRECHT’S OBJECT-ARRANGEMENTS

We must arrange our music, we must arrange our Art, we must arrange everything, I believe, so that people realize that they themselves are doing it, and not that something is being done to them.

—JOHN CAGE

Early Fluxus concerts, whose primary effect was to disturb and reconfigure the subject- and object-relations of music, most often took place in sites dedicated to performance. Soon, however, Fluxus’s quasi-musical actions and related objects began to make their way into gallery sites affiliated with the visual arts. With this change in context, Fluxus ideas came into dialogue with other neo-dada forms and practices of the time, and an alternative set of object-relations and viewing expectations were activated and challenged, namely those associated with modern sculpture and the Dada readymade. Through the example of Brecht’s object assemblages, which he began to produce in 1959 and showed in group exhibitions alongside Pop, New Realist, and early minimalist work, we can consider how Fluxus objects related—and oftentimes didn’t relate—to other currents of 1960s art. Although Brecht’s early object-based works were developed before Fluxus’s founding, they hold special interest here because many of their qualities were carried over wholesale into the game-like Fluxus editions Maciunas and his cohort went on to produce in great numbers. Between readymade and score, thus positing a new kind of notational object, Brecht’s assemblages were among Fluxus’s first artworks in flux.

Concurrent with his participation in Cage’s summer 1959 experimental composition course, Brecht sketched out ideas for his first solo show in New York. Titled *toward events: an arrangement*, Brecht’s exhibition inaugurated Anita Reuben’s Reuben Gallery, opened in October 1959 at 61 Fourth Avenue “specifically to carry on the Hansa [Gallery]’s anti-Abstract Expressionist movement,” as Sally Banes has described it.²¹ Along with Allan Kaprow’s famous *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, Brecht’s show launched a diverse program that included exhibitions and performances by Claes Oldenburg, Jim Dine, Red Grooms, George Segal,

Lucas Samaras, Al Hansen, Ray Johnson, Robert Whitman, Simone Forti, James Waring, and Richard Maxfield.²² An early career retrospective of sorts, *toward events: an arrangement* catalogued the transition from Brecht's early chance paintings of 1956–1957 to his concentration on events. As a visual artist deeply engaged with Cage's thought, Brecht's primary concern was translating his nascent events into a gallery context. What kind of *object* could successfully instigate and frame a temporally inflected perceptual event independently of the artist as mediator?

Brecht's greatest effort was spent developing four new pieces for the show, which he referred to as "events" due to the manner in which viewers were supposed to interact with them. Three of these—*The Case*, *The Dome*, and *The Cabinet*—were arrays of found objects gathered in readymade containers. The fourth, *Solitaire*, was a custom-made card deck for an invented game. For each work aside from *The Cabinet*, written instructions (with varying levels of clarity) were printed on a takeaway brown paper bag, yet another functional object potentially to be activated.²³ Instructions aside, the contents and form of each work already implied that viewers should use them in a kind of experimental, curiosity-driven play. Brecht took care to refer to the show as "an arrangement," and rather than identifying himself as the works' author, he claimed the works were simply "arranged by" him. This was a gesture of borrowing and adapting musical language (in which one can "arrange" a given melody in alternative ways) to the physical world and its materials and objects (including artworks), which, as Brecht the physical chemist understood, are never truly invented but simply arranged and rearranged continuously. Brecht also saw the invitation of (re)arrangement as a generous gesture of inclusion. "At the beginning it was because I didn't like it that everything was so closed," he explained. "At the end of the 50s, to enter a gallery and put your thumb on a painting was sacrilege. So it was done in a spirit of liberation: to let the spectators take part in what was happening."²⁴

Brecht's notion of arrangement, first posited in this exhibition, defined a mode of interaction that became common to Fluxus objects, from expanded book formats to boxed anthologies of event scores to the Fluxboxes that would welcome all manner of physical handling. Arrangement would certainly pertain to the material qualities of Brecht's 1963 *Water Yam* anthology, designed by Maciunas, in which dozens of individual score cards are encountered not as individual text pieces but as a handy collection of cards to shuffle through. Recalling the "pages in liberty" of Duchamp's *Green Box* and counterpoised to Cage's *Variations* scores made of superimposed transparencies (discussed in chapter 1), Brecht's 1960s event scores followed from this early work presented at Reuben Gallery and in Cage's class, where he first began to exploit the handiness of decks of playing cards and stacks of instructions that could be passed around among performers.²⁵ He took great interest in the layout of his texts and the card stock on which they were

printed, specifying to publishers that there should be a certain amount of blank space surrounding his works in printed form. Brecht also experimented with the idea that a blank card could constitute an event in and of itself. The idea for an event and its manifestation; the event and its objective existence; or, simply, event and object—became one and the same.

In Brecht's view, the most significant of the new works was *The Case*, a found picnic kit lined in black-and-white checkered print with leather organizing straps on the underside of its lid, a partitioned interior, and removable tray (plate 4). He filled it with a panoply of everyday objects affiliated with game play that activate multiple senses, worth listing out for the diversity of experiential worlds they reference: rubber balls, twine, a paddle-ball game, jump rope, Chinese noisemaker, wooden juggling clubs, dominos, golf tees, puzzle pieces, flash cards, newspaper and magazine clippings, photographs, ticket stubs, thread, a recipe card, musical score, seashell, candle, and leather glove. The vague instructions given on Brecht's paper-bag exhibition announcement read:

THE CASE is found on a table. It is approached by one to several people and opened. The contents are removed and used in ways appropriate to their nature. The case is repacked and closed. The event (which lasts possibly 10–30 minutes) comprises all sensible occurrences between approach and abandonment of the case.

The Case came into being much like *Motor Vehicle Sundown (Event)*: Brecht encountered the suitcase in a flea market, and it struck him as “an object waiting to be realized.”²⁶ Yet whereas Brecht's event score of the following year would utilize textual instructions to reframe or selectively contain a commonplace experience as art, in this case the device for transformationally reframing perceptual experience took the literal form of a boxlike container. As a recombinant readymade born from a phenomenal encounter, *The Case* recalled aspects of both Dada and Surrealist objects, as well as the work of Joseph Cornell and H. C. Westermann, artists in whom Brecht professed great interest.²⁷ However, Brecht avoided precious, fetishistic, and psychically charged objects in his pursuit of highlighting and transvaluing the banal. He typically employed objects that were widely available, simple, durable, and recognizable to the broadest possible audience. Although the many items contained in *The Case* were divorced from the packs and sets and bindings that would typically indicate their proper use, they retained a sense of their original use-value by way of their familiarity and utilitarian presentation. That is, the work's score-like imperative was owed not simply to Brecht's (quite open-ended) instructions, but to the qualities of the objects themselves, which implicitly called upon the viewer to use them in ways “appropriate to their nature.”

Fig 33. George Brecht, *The Dome (Redemption Dome)*, 1959. Wood, glass, metal, paint, aluminum foil, paper, pins, and steel nails. 13 x 9 1/2 in, 33 x 24 cm. Photo courtesy Lothar Schnepf. Art © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.



Brecht's instructions for another new work, *The Dome*, were simply that “necessary actions” be taken, relying ever more upon viewers’ familiarity with the objects at hand (fig. 33). *The Dome* featured a bell jar enclosing a petite wooden cabinet containing yet more enclosures: a tin canister labeled “for redemption” with two more canisters nested inside, the smallest containing a metal token embossed with the words “to be redeemed.” The token was meant to be “redeemable for something evolving out of the nature of the whole dome,” although there is no further record of what Brecht had in mind.²⁸ It is compelling to think that by incorporating this redeemable token in his work, Brecht knowingly evoked debates about the relationship of types and their tokens that have long occupied philosophies of art and music. Scholars have appealed to the type-token relation in order to describe the relationship between an allographic work (for instance a score) and its varied instantiations (or performances). In contrast to the Pla-

tonic understanding of this relation, which imagines the type as existing abstractly above and apart from its tokens, I would argue that in Fluxus the Aristotelian understanding of that relation is adopted, in which the type is immanently and *only* manifest in its tokens.²⁹ This view entails the idea that a printed score of *Drip Music*, to take one example, can be considered a realization of the work *Drip Music* alongside all other performance- and object-based realizations of it. It seems that Brecht played knowingly with the type-token dichotomy in acknowledgment that his works were modeled on a rather ambiguous form-type that revealed itself through a mutating succession of token realizations. In addition to *The Dome's* reference to a token, his score *Two Definitions* (1963) compiles six definitions of the word “token,” from “A medium of exchange issued at a nominal or face value in excess of its commodity value” to “a cup and saucer” (a token of hospitality). And, in the planning of *Water Yam* via correspondence with Maciunas, Brecht suggested the inclusion of token-like coupons, “which the subscriber could return to me, and for which I would send him an actual object or event.”³⁰

For its part, the wall-mounted *The Cabinet* included in Brecht's exhibition came with no instructions at all, perhaps because its objects—a clock, hourglass, thermometer, radiometer, magnifying glass, seeds, yo-yo, bell, and vial filled with drinking juice—already suggested movement or engagement in various ways, or registered the passage of time and other changes of state. The final new work of Brecht's *toward events* exhibition, *Solitaire*, was a custom game deck of twenty-seven cards with bits of paper, leaves, and seeds laminated onto their surfaces in abstract formations. The combinations of elements indicated three variables each of number, size, and color; one would play by matching cards according to their perceived relation to those categories. The game made explicit that the major framework of beholding in Brecht's work was arrangement in both the physical and conceptual sense, from the handling of objects to the organizing of reality by perception.

Between 1959 and 1962, Brecht's object-arrangements were exhibited in the United States and Europe alongside examples of other 1960s neo-dada object art. Audiences either ignored the works or were shocked by their utter ordinariness and the subtlety of the artist's transformation of his materials. Following Cage's desire to allow form to arise out of the “nature and context of the materials,” Brecht had attempted to remove himself from the role of director-composer and let the objects, typically associated with quotidian rituals of leisure and self-care, communicate the necessary requirements for an event to take place.³¹ Brecht's notational objects were readymades in the Duchampian tradition, and yet, unlike Duchamp's nominalist operation of designating everyday items as artworks, Brecht's many yo-yos, bells, clocks, and the like further implied a performative use-value, their success relying deeply on the commonplace virtuosity brought to the encounter by an engaged beholder's prior experience.

In early 1959, between his two summer classes with Cage, Brecht followed a course at the New School that covered symbolic logic and the philosophy of symbolic forms with particular attention to the work of Ernst Cassirer and Susanne Langer.³² From that material, he fixated on the idea that perception is organized according to the symbolic rubrics of science, art, and religion (the latter synonymous for Brecht with Zen Buddhism). His notebook from the time includes the observations that “The mind perceives by means of specific basic acts of symbolic transformation,” and that “Objects arise from a constitutive act and perception.”³³ Still, the radical proposition of Brecht’s event-like objects—that it was sufficient for a work of art to be arranged by the viewer or simply noticed as a perceptible “object”—was hardly legible to audiences at the time, as evidenced by an exchange recorded in a notebook included in *The Case* in which visitors were invited to write. Among the other mostly inane comments and doodles, a curious viewer named Sue wrote on December 5, 1959:

Mr. Brecht, Isn't art a means of expression? If so, have you purposely expressed something through the use of your case? Have you inspected and played with the contents of the case as you have instructed your audience to do? Have you tried to find out or have you thought about what you've expressed in assembling this case (even though you may have assembled its contents at random, with no purpose in mind)?

Presuming the woman would return to view the perplexing exhibition, Brecht responds directly in the notebook, “Dear Sue: Please contact me,” providing his home address.

While Brecht’s objects may have resonated superficially with the combines of Robert Rauschenberg and the sculpted flashlights and lightbulbs of Jasper Johns, they were the outcome of a more subtle aesthetic transformation. As interactive works, they also had little in common with the whimsical gadgetry of Jean Tinguely’s *Méta-matics* or the composed kineticism of the objects released under Daniel Spoerri’s *Édition MAT* (*Multiplication d’Art Transformable*). Brecht’s seemingly expressionless work was even at odds with the work on which the Reuben Gallery staked its reputation: the proto-Pop expressionism—“unceremonious, anti-formal, untidy and highly physical”—of Segal, Dine, Samaras, Oldenburg, and Grooms, whose objects, environments, and Happenings were staged as dramatic, installation-like extensions into the city and its streets.³⁴ By comparison, Brecht’s work was radically anti-theatrical, modest, and domestic, even. Henry Martin has described the nature of Brecht’s objects well:

Brecht’s work is made of all the tiny little odd things that come and go and find their ways into pockets or live in the extra ash-tray on the corner of a desk. . . .

His favorite objects . . . are objects without any common collocation though one might be able to maintain that the things he deals with are all the little human things that become visible by virtue of their having escaped the attention of modern design and the systems for the computer control of the images of our environments.³⁵

What Brecht saw in his many tiny little odd things that come and go was a model for an object that could be more than just an object, an object that could be something else: an instruction, a call to activity, a form of notation in and of itself. There were almost no precedents for this kind of interactive sculptural object in the history of modern art. Whatever models existed had been repressed within histories of modernism despite the three-dimensional nature of the medium. Even the most avant-garde interventions had only intimated the kind of touching actually invited by Brecht. Duchamp's readymades and his miniature retrospective *Boîte-en-Valise* (1935–1941) had been the first gestures of a practice that would move from sculpture to the object in their portability, incorporation of readymade materials, and invitation of tactile engagement.³⁶ Yet the readymades seemed to do more to sever everyday objects from their everydayness, and the *Valise*, even as one must delicately unpack its contents, still prioritized vision, being after all a miniature museum. Duchamp's more successful experiment with tactile engagement was *Prière de Toucher* (*Please Touch*), a foam breast attached to the cover of the exhibition catalogue for Duchamp and André Breton's 1947 international Surrealist exhibition, a work that was not a sculpture at all but, tellingly, married to the form of the book, as many Fluxus editions would be.

THE 1960S OBJECT IN CONTEXT

It is worth pausing to observe that in the larger context of artistic discourse in the United States, the term “object” emerged with renewed force in the 1960s to describe a diverse range of neo-avant-garde practices that signaled in various ways a new, postmodern aesthetic exceeding the forms and discourses of modern sculpture. The turn to readymade, literal, or decidedly un-monumental three-dimensional forms—by Rauschenberg and Johns, by artists associated with American and French New Realism, Fluxus, Pop, and minimalism, or simply by neo-dada artists broadly defined—established in this moment “the object” as a new aesthetic category, perhaps even a new medium for art. According to the well-known writings of artist-critics Donald Judd (“Specific Objects,” 1965) and Robert Morris (“Notes on Sculpture” I–IV, 1966–1969), the 1960s object was three-dimensional, not painting and not sculpture, tangible, and intimately relatable to if not smaller than the human body.³⁷ The catalogue for the group exhi-

bition *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary*, staged at the YM/YWHA of Philadelphia in October–November 1962 while the first Fluxus concert tour was unfolding overseas, included an early attempt to provisionally define this term among other new aesthetic tendencies and nomenclature. Organized by Audrey Sabol and Billy Klüver, the exhibition included works by Brecht, Dine, Johns, Kaprow, Klüver, Oldenburg, Rauschenberg, Segal, Tinguely, Robert Watts, Marisol, Robert Breer, Roy Lichtenstein, and James Rosenquist. It was organized in a moment when these diverse artists' work was seen as part of a shared conversation, before critics and historians would parse this list of names into so many separately defined movements. The fascinating catalogue, coauthored by Klüver, Oldenburg, Rauschenberg, and Tinguely, took the form of an ad hoc dictionary-in-progress of art's "new vocabulary," with the word "object" defined thus:

ob-ject n. 1. something which may be perceived by the senses; a distinct bounded thing having specific density. 2. in this art movement a word signifying concern for "things" as opposed to the action-continuum of abstract expressionism. 3. the object is a fact. 4. no object is purely functional.³⁸

This definition was multiply resonant. It referred to the materiality or resolute thingliness of the art-object as much as it situated the work in opposition to abstract expressionism's embrace of both abstraction and expressionism. It furthermore offered a definition minima for the legibility of an artwork that foreshadowed the "non-compact," "diffuse," and "nearly imperceptible" forms of expanded and shape-shifting materiality that would characterize the post-minimalist and process art to come later in the decade.³⁹

By the next year, Pop art centered on iconic imagery had begun to be separated from this milieu, and the problem of how to define the work of these so-called object artists remained. In December 1963, Nicolas and Elena Calas organized the exhibition *Hard Center* at Thibaut Gallery, New York, including a Johns flashlight, Morris's *Three Rulers (Yardstick)* (1963), box constructions by Walter De Maria, and a chair piece by Brecht. The exhibition was accompanied by an essay that began: "*It is not art, It is not painting, It is not sculpture. IT IS. It is an object, yet not the product of the imagination, nor the outcome of an act of grace.*"⁴⁰ The text continues:

A new generation of artists is shifting the emphasis from the subject to the object: what is it? We do not escape from reality when facing the new object for it is neither fantastic or symbolic, nor intended as an expression of individual or collective unconscious, nor is it the sign of a secret code. With this object, we are far removed from the lower depths of man and society and stay firmly in the center of the *now*.

Such heralding of the revolutionary potential of the facticity of the object evinced the new neo-avant-garde aesthetic of the counterspectacular, pitted against a mass culture of the image that was thought to be usurping and falsifying reality. Common objects were increasingly seen by artists as a bulwark against the administered image culture of mass media, now the subject of popular critique. In 1961, following the watershed television debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, and six years before the appearance of Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, the conservative historian Daniel J. Boorstin published *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*.⁴¹ One of the earliest critical analyses of postmodern image culture in the United States, Boorstin's concept of the "pseudo-event" referred to gatherings, incidents, or scenes designed expressly for circulation in the media, which found their corollary in the rise of celebrities, those carefully scripted pseudo-subjects similarly designed for media circulation. For neo-avant-garde artists, the corollary of such artificiality, deception, and fantasy in artistic practice could be found in work that relied on highly crafted illusionistic representation and/or romantic conceptions of the authenticity of creative expression. The turn to everyday objects and materials was deemed an effective counter-tactic to both. Realistically, however, the line between image and object was already fast giving way, as the corporate world and its admen embraced planned obsolescence, and the impromptu 1959 "kitchen debate" between Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev, set against the backdrop of a model American kitchen, shored up the apparent value of Western consumer object-relations. On this phenomenon, Jean Baudrillard's 1968 book *The System of Objects* would join Debord's account as an attempt to theorize the increasingly complex, imbricated relationships between subject, image, object, and capital in the post-World War II era.⁴²

In the Fluxus context, Dick Higgins forged his attack on the mass media's negative effects in a widely circulated text of 1966, "Statement on Intermedia," a manifesto in support of an expanded media landscape in which artists could begin to explore the terrain between mediums.⁴³ If Higgins's advocacy of intermedia has been read art-historically as a celebration of new media *tout court*, his writings on the subject in fact advocated *against* the fetishization of the technological in light of its impact on human culture. In his "Statement on Intermedia," Higgins writes:

Due to the spread of mass literacy, to television and the transistor radio, our sensitivities have changed. The very complexity of this impact gives us a taste for simplicity. . . . The art which most directly does this is the one which allows this immediacy, with a minimum of distractions. . . . If we assume, unlike McLuhan and others who have shed some light on the problem up until now, that there are dangerous forces at work in our world, isn't it appropriate to ally ourselves against these?⁴⁴

Higgins's implication that the world's "dangerous forces" included media culture and its distractions was echoed across Fluxus work, even—and especially—by those artists who engaged directly with televisual media. Nam June Paik and Wolf Vostell, in particular, more often attacked, mangled, and destroyed their television sets than used them as fully functioning image-broadcasting devices. In line with Higgins's call for simplicity and a minimum of distractions, the 1960s object, aligned with the material and aesthetic vocabulary of the readymade, was heralded by Fluxus-affiliated artists as diminishing the centrality of the artist's ego and authority, orienting the viewing subject emphatically in the present, and enabling privileged access to a kind of real, unmediated, concrete experience absent the deceits of illusionism.

1960S OBJECT MODELS, PART I: ASSEMBLAGE

In 1961, the time of Brecht's participation in the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *The Art of Assemblage*, the interactive nature of his objects was still anomalous among the neo-dada tendencies highlighted in that exhibition. Curated by William Seitz, the exhibition brought together a vast array of genre-defying examples of American assemblage from the late 1950s, complemented and legitimated by early twentieth-century Dada and Surrealist works. Brecht was represented by the work *Repository* (1961), a multi-part cabinet with numerous openings and drawers that organized a collection of commonplace objects including keys, balls, toothbrushes, and dice, many appearing in diverse multiples (plate 5). In search of items to fill the piece, Brecht listed in his notebooks all manner of "balls" (rubber, baseball, golf, ping-pong, lottery, candy, glass, seed, rosary, glass eye, etc.) and "rods" (brass, steel, aluminum, copper, glass, Lucite, ceramic, dowels, knitting needles, rolled-up documents, springs, etc.) that he could think of.⁴⁵ For its part, the multi-form container incorporated vertically gridded shelving, hooks, miniature cupboards with doors, and partitioned drawers that could be pulled out—all variants on the general theme of containment, just as the work's inventory consisted of variations on a series of generic objects.

Most works in the group exhibition appropriated everyday objects for incorporation into two- and three-dimensional collage-like compositions that continued to treat the items as formal elements in a self-contained, hermetic picture. By contrast, the objects Brecht chose to populate *Repository* were indices for states of change and meant to be activated by the viewer. Like the items included in Brecht's 1959 object-arrangements shown at Reuben Gallery, they evoked familiar gestures, particularly transformational or transactional ones. But now Brecht had removed all textual supplements from the work in acknowledgment of the objects' incipient use-value, as if to suggest that displacing dice, for example, from

their typical context in a game and incorporating them into a work of art should not necessarily cancel out their utility. As with *The Dome* and *The Case*, Brecht intended for visitors to interact with *Repository*—to take out the objects, move them around, and exchange them with things they had on hand. In this, the work's partitioned structure was a kind of game board or classification device for which visitors were to invent their own rules. Brecht took care to write to Seitz, insisting that despite his agreement to participate in the exhibition it remained inappropriate to describe his work as assemblage. *Repository* was rather an "arrangement" in the musical sense, one that should continue to be rearranged over the duration of the show.⁴⁶

It is particularly instructive to observe how Brecht's object-arrangements of this period developed in relation to the mid to late 1950s work of Rauschenberg and Johns, which incorporated features similar to what appeared in Brecht's works: found objects that index change (clocks, thermometers, and compasses), or hinged doors that can open and close. Rauschenberg's motivation for using such devices, as he explained, was the belief that "a picture is more like the real world when it's made out of the real world."⁴⁷ In the years just preceding *The Art of Assemblage*, the three artists' work appeared together in two iterations of an assemblage show staged at Martha Jackson Gallery in the spring and fall of 1960, *New Media—New Forms* and *New Forms—New Media II*. Before this, works by both Rauschenberg and Brecht were included in two group shows in the winter of 1959–1960, *Group 3* at Douglass College and *Below Zero* at Reuben Gallery.

Rauschenberg's objects, following from the lessons of Pollock and Cage, were designed to heighten the viewer's awareness of the indexical and performative qualities of painting. And yet, while they ostensibly registered change, they were typically only activated or set in motion symbolically or virtually. Meanwhile, the indexicality of Johns's contemporaneous "device" paintings, in which he attached to the canvas the very tools used in making his quasi-mechanical marks, referred to an action resolutely past. Despite their movability, the hinged doors of Rauschenberg's *Short Circuit* and *Interview* (both 1955) or of Johns's targets and plaster casts were typically untouched by visitors, forever frozen in time. At the very least, they were inextricably contained within the picture plane, dramatically excised from the everyday experience they are meant to call forth. While the inclusion of such diverse found elements in this assemblage work was an argument for, as Yve-Alain Bois has noted, the "entropic equalization of all things" (notably resonant with Leo Steinberg's earlier notion of the "flatbed" picture plane), this equalization takes place purely within the microcosm of composed pictorial space, with the effect that "there is no fundamental difference between a collage element and a painted one."⁴⁸ While Rauschenberg and Johns's neo-dada works took their content directly from the real world, in the final instance their everyday objects were stilled within an inert picture. The forestalled potential of this version of neo-dada

audience activation would be hypostatized in Andy Warhol's *Dance Diagrams* and *Do It Yourself* paintings (1962), which parodied such empty gestures of interactivity and connected the utopian ideal of participation, as Benjamin Buchloh has argued, to a highly choreographed mass culture of false modes of inclusion and sociality—"those *real rituals of participation* within which mass culture contains and controls its audiences."⁴⁹ In contrast to works identified primarily with the medium of painting and charged with an ultimately limited evocation of the performative and instructional, Brecht's object-arrangements strove to maintain an integral relationship to spaces and experiences of everyday use and physical intimacy.

The departure of Brecht's work from the concerns of Rauschenberg and Johns, and what accounted for its strangeness in relation to other neo-dada assemblage work of the same moment, can be further illuminated by examining Brecht's approach to a singular everyday object, the chair.⁵⁰ In spring 1960, *The Cabinet* from Brecht's Reuben exhibition appeared in *New Media—New Forms* along with Rauschenberg's *Pilgrim* (1960) (figs. 34, 35). *Pilgrim* is a highly painterly combine, in part a stretched canvas covered over in manic patches of blue, white, red, black, and yellow paint that obscure bits of paper and fabric. Added to this, a wooden chair stands on the floor in front of the wall-mounted painting, its top edge discreetly secured to the canvas with a simple hinge. According to Rauschenberg, "the chair found its way into *Pilgrim* because, on a visit to a collector's apartment, chairs had to be moved in order to see the pictures."⁵¹ The chair also recalled a famous lesson absorbed by Rauschenberg from Josef Albers at Black Mountain College, in which Albers would set an ordinary wooden chair at the front of the room, running it over with his hands and sitting in it to demonstrate its particular qualities for the class's observation—to show, as Martin Duberman has described, "that no chair is an abstraction, and so should never be treated as one."⁵² Albers's lesson was likely inspired by the teachings of Edmund Husserl, whose objectivist phenomenology, as Annette Michelson has noted in relation to Morris's object-based work, had been influential to the Cubists and their turn to the everyday object in the early twentieth century.⁵³

And yet, if Rauschenberg's chair was likewise meant to be a paradigmatic enunciation of the object's concrete actuality, Brecht's personal encounter with *Pilgrim* proved otherwise. He recounts, "Just as I was about to sit in it [the chair], I was told, 'No, no! It's attached and you can't sit in it.'"⁵⁴ Brecht's disillusioning experience demonstrated that Rauschenberg's embrace of everyday objects was only partial, and that their transformation into the elements of a combine blocked what Brecht felt was most interesting about them: that they might operate equally and simultaneously as objects for aesthetic consideration and as objects of use.

In a few instances, however, Rauschenberg's objects did exceed the limits of the merely pictorial, the most famous example being the interactive combine



Fig 34. Robert Rauschenberg, *Pilgrim*, 1960. Combine: oil, graphite, paper, printed paper, and fabric on canvas, with painted wood chair. 201.3 x 136.8 x 47.3 cm / 79 1/4 x 53 7/8 x 18 5/8 in. Private collection. © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



Fig 35. Robert Rauschenberg, *Pilgrim* (detail), 1960. Photo: Natilee Harren. © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Black Market (1961), possibly made in response to Brecht's *The Case* shown at Reuben two years prior. In this work, a suitcase lies on the floor below a painted and collaged canvas, and the two items are connected by a rope. Inside the suitcase are four objects to be continuously exchanged with offerings brought by viewers, who are requested to mark the transactions on four metal clipboards attached to the canvas. Notably, both Rauschenberg and Brecht faced disappointment with how the public engaged their respective works, *Black Market* and *Repository*, in both cases taking objects without replacing them. It was a turning point for Brecht, who explained:

At that time I was still very optimistic and I hoped that people would enter the game with a certain gentleness, that perhaps they'd exchange one object for another, that they'd open the drawers to move the objects and so forth. Unfortunately I had to come to the realization that that didn't work, that people would

take the things I loved most and leave nothing in exchange and so forth. That was a huge disappointment for me and I had to decide to limit the exchange to my friends.⁵⁵

Black Market faced a similar fate when it went on display at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam as part of Pontus Hultén's 1961 exhibition *Art in Motion*. Hultén wrote to co-curator Billy Klüver, "All the objects in *Black Market* have disappeared. Nothing is left. . . . People have taken them without replacing anything themselves."⁵⁶ At the show's next venue, the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, interaction with the work was prohibited and the call to participation rendered merely symbolic. Effectively, *Black Market* had become a painting with a useless prosthesis. (The work's forestalled potential continues into the present; as such, it is likely forever to contain its current flashlight, handkerchief, photograph, and barnacle-encrusted light bulb.)⁵⁷ By 1963, Brecht's opinion of the artist he had previously so admired had fallen. He now saw Rauschenberg as "an old master" whose work seemed disappointingly ossified and restricted.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, in his own practice Brecht pursued the convergence of the ready-made and everyday experience, arranging objects for exhibition in ways that left them unseen as artworks and thus in a sense invisible, if not lost. In 1961, Brecht's event score *Three Chair Events* appeared in the forms of a stack of takeaway copies of the text and a realized three-part object at Martha Jackson Gallery in *Environments, Situations, Spaces*, an exhibition that also included Kaprow's *Yard* and a version of Oldenburg's *The Store*. Of Brecht's three chairs—a white one spot-lit in the gallery, a yellow one set out on the sidewalk, and a black one placed in the bathroom—the yellow and black chairs went mostly unnoticed (fig. 36). Brecht delighted in the black and yellow chairs' marginal visibility as artworks, recounting that "the most beautiful event happened to the yellow chair that was outside on the side-walk in front of the gallery. When I arrived there was a very lovely woman wearing a large hat comfortably sitting in the chair and talking to friends. And do you know who it was? It was Claes Oldenburg's mother."⁵⁹ Similarly, Brecht's realization of his score *3 Table and Chair Events* (1962) was overlooked when displayed in Philadelphia as part of *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary*. Brecht arranged two white chairs around a table, set in varying configurations with props including a plate, silverware, drinking glass, playing cards, and a newspaper that changed daily. Following the exhibition's opening, he wrote excitedly to Maciunas, "Many people used the furniture to put their coats on, to rest on, etc., and the piece was effectively lost in ordinary life! Nothing special! . . . I am very happy about that."⁶⁰ With eerie simplicity, the effect of such works, if they were detected at all, was to activate all like objects as deserving of aesthetic contemplation.

If Brecht, like Rauschenberg, had backed away from explicitly inviting tactile participation after his negative experience with *Repository*, the subtle presenta-



tions of *Three Chair Events* and *3 Table and Chair Events* were an alternative means of continuing to make open, interactive works. Whether or not Brecht's *Three Chair Events* was in fact a direct response to Rauschenberg's *Pilgrim* produced the year prior (I sense it was), the two should be seen as being in close dialogue around the question of the readymade's relationship to everyday life in the wake of its designation as art. Brecht's practice, along with much Fluxus object production, sought not Rauschenberg's gap between art and life but a paradoxical object status in which both terms are in operation simultaneously.⁶¹

Brecht struggled to find ways of isolating found objects for contemplation as aesthetic phenomena without severing their relationship to quotidian experience. Approaching the problem in his typically systematic way, Brecht made a list in his notebook of "ways to treat objects in order to see them," which included surrounding them with empty space, lighting them, altering them subtly, inviting people to interact with them, and placing other objects nearby with which they may form relationships of continuity or difference.⁶² Following the first wave of Fluxus concerts in Europe in late 1962, witnesses reported to Brecht that his works often disappeared into the background of more overt performance activities, particularly his score for *Piano Piece, 1962*, which indicates, simply, "a vase of flowers on(to) a piano."⁶³ (While initially amused at this, over time Brecht became disappointed with even the sophisticated art audience's inability to detect his subtle arrangements long after the lessons of Duchamp should have been well absorbed. In the early 1970s this was still a problem; during a studio visit, a pair of "specialists

Fig 36. Realization of George Brecht's *Three Chair Events* (1961) for the exhibition *Environments, Situations, Spaces* at Martha Jackson Gallery, New York, 1961. Photo by Robert R. McElroy. Robert R. McElroy photographs of Happenings and early performance art, 1959–2012, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2014.M.7). © J. Paul Getty Trust.

in looking at things” did not notice the broom and yellow dustpan that Brecht had carefully arranged in a corner.)⁶⁴ In correspondence with Brecht about this complex feature of his work, Maciunas wrote that he considered Brecht’s events to be neither material nor conceptual but “mind-perceptual,” inasmuch as the act of transforming his readymade objects and phenomena into works of art was ultimately entrusted to the viewer, namely to the sensitive form-giving capacity of his or her consciousness. Maciunas distilled Brecht’s method into an homage score titled *4 Excercises* [*sic*]:

- note object
- observe object
- discern object
- become object.⁶⁵

Brecht continued to seek the minima tactics of legibility for his scores and objects without formalizing them or separating them irrevocably from their environment by means of plinth or frame. This he would achieve by means of “emptiness or formality” in time or space, whether through the careful graphic spacing of a printed score or the containerization or careful lighting of objects.⁶⁶

While Brecht was interested in dramatically loosening the work’s form and opening it up to the contingency of context, the concept of enduring form was not entirely abandoned. By 1966, he clarified his earlier position that “individual works have no definite form” by writing in his notebook, “It is rather only explicitness that has been lacking: a form which without being a FORM, traitorous to immediate experience, permits us to experience directly.”⁶⁷ Brecht’s experiments in shuttling between event score and object were part of a search for a kind of form *without* absolute form; form understood as an empty armature of diagrammatic relations or a container like his case or cabinet or dome; form that accommodates and indeed relies for its very existence and legibility upon such varied content that it may—indeed *must*—continue to have a life in the present, quite apart from its original author.

1960S OBJECT MODELS, PART II: PROP

As I have argued, Brecht’s model of merging object and event was at first developed in conversation with a model of assemblage in which the object was integrated into a primarily pictorial plane of composition. A second, less visible model with which Brecht’s work more properly aligned came out of the intersecting experimental music, theater, and dance communities in New York, where found objects and provisional constructions were integrated into performances as props

and sets. An early setting for these activities was the now-famous series of concerts organized by La Monte Young at Yoko Ono's Chambers Street loft in 1960–1961. A catalyst for like-minded experimentalists and proto-Fluxus energies, this site was where Maciunas first came to know Brecht and Higgins.⁶⁸ Young and Ono presented a wide-ranging program of music, poetry, plays, “machinery,” and events by cross-disciplinary artists including Young, Cage, De Maria, Forti (then Simone Morris), Maxfield, Morris, Joseph Byrd, Henry Flynt, Jackson Mac Low, Terry Riley, David Tudor, and Christian Wolff.⁶⁹ Like Brecht, many were influenced by the work and teachings of Cage and sought an alternative to mid-century modes of poetic expressionism.

In the performance works of this milieu, objects were utilized to register, guide, constrain, and control movement with the effect of focusing performers' and viewers' perception. The term “object” in this context stood for two things. First, a set of materials: banal, everyday things of no particular visual interest, oftentimes having the basic look of proto-minimalist sculpture. Second, and more importantly, the object served as the grounds for cultivating a perceptual experience centered on mindful scrutiny of immanent, concrete phenomena. Often, the two were brought together in ways that we have already seen in Brecht's work for Cage's class: parameters for an action are given and performed in a dispassionate yet focused, task-like manner and may involve interacting with a given set of simple objects. This certainly pertained to Young's own concert evening, in which he and Robert Dunn performed *Composition 1960 #10 (to Bob Morris)*—“Draw a straight line and follow it”—thirty times in succession with the aid of a plumb bob and a yardstick, the length of the concert dependent upon the length of the drawn line and the working pace of the performers. After the first concert, which the artists felt had gone on too long, the line was shortened for the second; still, the event lasted over three hours.⁷⁰ Young's interest in monomorphic sounds and activities and experiences of sustained attention first explored in his *Composition* series led him to develop a drone music practice and to found the Theatre of Eternal Music in 1965. Of Young's music, which pursued the more conceptual notion of the object I have just described, Cage reflected, “Listening reverts to placing a particular object under a microscope so that the object becomes an entire universe, simply because it is enlarged to that extent. It ceases to be an object.”⁷¹ In other words, while an “object”—whether in the form of a thingly prop or an audible tone cluster—may appear to be at the center of these experimental, neo-avant-garde works, there was little value invested in the object itself. Moreover, the performance gesture served explicitly to undermine the object's integrity or singularity.

Brecht's name appeared on several announcements for Young and Ono's series, although no performances of his were realized there. However, he was at the time designing sets, props, and sound accompaniment for collaborative works

with the dancer and choreographer James Waring that were staged at other underground venues in New York. In the course of Waring and Brecht's "chamber event" piece *Gossoon*, presented at Reuben Gallery on June 11, 1960, and at the Living Theatre on August 8, 1960, balloons, toy animals, confetti, folding fans, flash cards, flashlights, and paper balls and stars were handled by the performers, and some were distributed to the audience. In his notebook, Brecht considered requesting audience members to bring objects with them that could be spontaneously incorporated into the performance.⁷²

Not only did simple, everyday objects play an important role in enabling performers to focus their activities and attention and retain a non-expressionistic demeanor, performance works were understood as object-like despite their extension through time. Following Forti's dance works incorporating a seesaw and boxes on casters presented at Reuben Gallery in December 1960, in May 1961 she premiered at Ono's loft a group of *Dance Constructions* executed with the participation of Morris, Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, and Carl Lehmann-Haupt.⁷³ With titles like *Slant Board*, *Huddle*, *Hangers*, and *Platforms*, Forti's constructions centered on specially designed props that operated as hybrid prop-sculptures both functional and formally compelling. What's more, Forti thought of the *Dance Constructions* as object-like in themselves, explaining, "I thought of a lot of those pieces more as sculpture that the audience could walk around."⁷⁴ In *Slant Board*, performers clung to knotted ropes as they climbed up, down, and across an eight-foot-square board positioned at a forty-five-degree angle to the wall. In *Hangers*, performers wove paths between and inevitably bumped into other bodies—the "hangers"—who stood resting their weight in long loops of rope suspended from the ceiling. The two performers in *Platforms* hid beneath coffin-like wooden boxes and whistled back and forth to each other. As the only material constant for works whose choreographic parameters are otherwise quite open, the props devised for *Slant Board*, *Hangers*, and *Platforms* were designed to test the various ways in which a subject might interact with them. Meanwhile, no props or sets are involved in *Huddle*, a churning hillock of bodies out from and over which one performer after another climbs. As Forti instructs, "The duration should be adequate for the viewers to observe it [the huddle], walk around it, get a feel of it in its behavior."⁷⁵ The tightly gathered group of performers collectively *become* an object (according to Forti's instructions, "the huddle" or "the mass")—a unitary, singular thing: "it." Forti's language vacillates ambiguously between the verbal and nominative, treating the performers as object-like entities; they are at times no longer dancers but "hangers" metonymically identified with their props. In another of Forti's works, *Accompaniment for La Monte's 2 Sounds*, also performed at Ono's loft, the performer stands in a hanging loop of rope tightly wound above the top of his or her head. It is the rope that performs while the body remains passive: "The rope unwinds, then rewinds on its own momentum, unwinds and

rewinds on and on until, finally, it becomes still.”⁷⁶ No mention of an actively performing body at all—only objects, and object-like bodies.

In this experimental performance culture, prop-like objects were also displayed apart from the performing body, in ways clearly resonant with what Brecht had tried to achieve in *toward events: an arrangement*. De Maria and Morris both presented performative objects at fund-raising concerts for *An Anthology of Chance Operations* held at the Living Theatre in January and February 1962. At the January 8 event, De Maria displayed “objects in the lobby”—basic plywood box constructions that continued his series of “object/situations” shown at Maciunas’s AG Gallery in July 1961. De Maria’s text, *Boxes for Meaningless Work* (1960–1961), published in *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, describes two such boxes containing “small things” that the beholder is invited to shuttle from one container to the other.⁷⁷ At the February 5 fundraiser, Morris presented the performance-sculpture *Column*, a two-foot-square by eight-foot-high rectangular gray column, which stood upright onstage for three and a half minutes before being toppled by Morris with the tug of a string and then left to lie there for another three and a half minutes. This was not the first time Morris presented sculpture-like objects in a performance context; on the invitation of Flynt, Morris’s *Box With the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961), a walnut box exhibited with a hidden audio recording of its own construction, was (dis)played in a concert of new music at Harvard University in March 1961.⁷⁸

The proto-minimalist sound and object experiments of Morris and Young in particular relied on a given structure that in its pared-down, obdurate perpetuity called attention to phenomenological experience, thus setting the terms for the reception of minimalism in the years to come. Morris’s earliest articulation of this key strategy can be located in his statement of 1960–1961, “Blank Form,” meant to be included in *An Anthology of Chance Operations* but which the artist pulled last-minute while the publication’s printed pages were being stored at his loft, awaiting collation (fig. 37). The gesture was for Morris a symbolic withdrawal of his increasingly focused practice from the context of an incredibly diverse if not unruly performance community. Still, his contribution has survived in at least one mock-up of the publication, made before he was able to extract his work from it. Morris’s fascinating statement, which highlights the importance of the artwork’s differential relationship to “the subject’s field of perception,” clarifies the motivation behind works like *Column*. It indicates why he may have felt his quasi-anonymous, seemingly anti-art forms initially required a theatrical presentation in order to properly frame their reception.⁷⁹ Morris’s text also included descriptions of three paradigmatic examples of blank forms: a gray rectangular column measuring two feet by two feet by eight feet (an exact description of his *Column*), a smooth gray wall measuring two feet by eight feet by eight feet, and a gray cabinet measuring one foot by two feet by six feet, just

MORRIS,

ESSAY
ROBERT
COMPOSITIONS

Fig 37. Robert Morris, "Essay, Compositions" (c. 1960-1961), published in unique handbound copy of *An Anthology of chance operations, concept art, anti art, indeterminacy, plans of action, diagrams, music, dance constructions, improvisation, meaningless work, natural disasters, compositions, mathematics, essays, poetry*, ed. La Monte Young (1962). Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (94-B19099). © 1962 Jackson Mac Low. Courtesy of the Estate of Jackson Mac Low.

large enough to enter (a rough description of his 1961 work *Pine Portal*). When the first major exhibition of minimalism, *Black, White and Gray*, opened at the Wadsworth Atheneum in 1964 (Brecht participated with an arrangement of table and chairs), the presentation of Morris's blank forms in a conventional gallery setting was sufficient to affirm their identity as static sculptures. Their performative implications were reduced to the fleeting auratic remembrances of the attendees of those few early concerts. According to Yvonne Rainer, art history has forgotten the humorous affect that Morris's *L-Beams* (1965) had when they first appeared, presumably because after his performance with *Column*, the mute, oversize objects continued to elicit suspicion that bodies might be hidden inside.⁸⁰ Going forward, implications of duration and temporality were upheld mainly rhetorically, through the arguments lobbied around Morris's work and minimalism more generally by Donald Judd ("Specific Objects" [1965]) and Michael Fried ("Art and Objecthood" [1967]).

As the practice of Young in the ensuing years pursued the transcendental unity of the drone, the sculptural practices of Morris and De Maria departed from the overtly theatrical and participatory and shifted toward the presentation of all manner of unitary, gestalt forms that came to characterize minimalism. Even if the projects of minimalism and Fluxus initially shared the goal of heightening viewers' perceptual awareness, the means by which the artwork would function as an object in each trajectory, along with the means by which objects in general would function, were diametrically opposed. The Fluxus model, which I have traced through the early work of Brecht, proposed a dialectical meeting of object and score determined to evade both the fetishization of the artwork as a unique, single-authored entity and the dissipation of the work into a completely abstract, conceptual procedure ostensibly divorced from concrete experience and tangible materiality. As we have seen in Brecht's work, there exists no ideal form against which

TRAVELING SCULPTURE - a means toward a sound record

Materials: A varied assortment of lumber, at least several pieces for each person involved; carpentry tools; nails; still camera; tape recorder; clocks possibly wipers.

This event will take place outdoors, preferably in a remote field far from houses, factories, streets, etc. Any number of people may participate as builders; those who act as photographer, sound recorder, and time keeper may also participate as builders.

A pathway is first selected, e.g., 8 feet wide and 15 yards long - its size will be dependent upon the number of people participating and how much room they feel they need. The pathway is then marked out with stakes. The lumber and tools should be close at hand.

The tape recorder is turned on and a construction is begun at one end ("A") of the pathway within the parallel boundaries. All the lumber available should be put into the construction.

This completed, a photograph is taken (photographs of the construction should be taken at each successive stage - stages being those points decided upon by the photographer either during the construction process or beforehand. The time of each photograph and the position of the photographed "stage" relative to one of the ends of the pathway should be recorded). When all of the lumber has been used the builders should go to the extreme "A" side of the construction and begin dismantling that side and carrying the lumber around to the "B" side and so extend their construction on and on until the "B" end of the pathway is reached. Construction should continue from "A" to "B" without stopping, except for individual or collective rests for the builders. At the extreme "B" point some or most or all of the construction should be consumed by setting fire to it. The tape recorder is then turned off. All but one should then leave, taking with them their permanent record in sound of the event.

The next day, or as soon as possible, the one who remains behind should return to the site with the photographs enlarged as big as possible with the times that they were taken noted on them. These are to be put up on stakes along the outside edge of the pathway at approximately the points where they were taken.

R. Morris
1961

BLANK FORM

From the subjective point of view there is no such thing as nothing - Blank Form shows this, as well as might any other situation of deprivation.

So long as the form (in the broadest possible sense; situation) is not reduced beyond perception, so long as it perpetuates and upholds itself as being subject in the subject's field of perception, the subject reacts to it in many particular ways when I call it art. He reacts in other ways when I do not call it art. Art is primarily a situation in which one assumes an attitude of reacting to some of one's awareness as art.

Blank Form is still in the great tradition of artistic weakness-taste. That is to say I prefer it - especially the content (as quoted to "anti-form" for the attempt to contradict one's taste). Blank Form is like life, essentially empty, allowing plenty of room for disquisitions on its nature and mocking each in its turn.

Blank Form slowly moves a large gray film and laughs about how close it got to the second law of thermodynamics.

Some examples of Blank Form Sculpture:

1. A column with perfectly smooth, rectangular surfaces, 2 feet by 2 feet by 8 feet, painted gray.
2. A wall, perfectly smooth and painted gray, measuring 2 feet by 8 feet by 8 feet.
3. A cabinet with simple construction, painted gray and measuring 1 foot by 2 feet by 6 feet - that is, a cabinet just large enough to enter.

PROJECT FOR SCULPTURE:

Begin a series of images such that each successive one arrives closer by one half the distance to zero than the preceding one; the images need not be related.

an individual realization may be evaluated as better or worse; each is proper to its given context. Brecht's forms with "no definite form," his objects without a fixed object-status, established the conditions for the work of art to change its form continuously. In effect, the material conditions of his works were made to mirror the viewer's ever-shifting perspective rather than provide a contrast or foil to it (as Morris's blank forms sought to do). Brecht opted for the object's dispersal on both conceptual and material registers over its formal consolidation, as multitudes of interpretations of a given score-concept, or of arrangements of a given collection of objects, gave rise to an ever-divergent history of realizations for a single work.

Brecht's investment in the activity of arrangement was not simply a means of activating staid object-relations in the realm of art, it also hoped to re-enliven perception in a way that transferred the creative power of form-making into the hands, eyes, and consciousness of the viewer. The germ of Brecht's idea for *Motor Vehicle Sundown (Event)*—that in the face of a striking phenomenon, "a wholly 'event' piece could be drawn from the situation"—was just such an example of a formative act of perception, for which simple objects could be the main structuring components.⁸¹ Brecht's friend of many years, Hermann Braun, once remarked how, in Brecht's view, one's experience of reality could be thought of as a continual game of diagramming and tinkering with subject-object relations and their rearrangement:

How often we have sat together in the pub, when suddenly he took the salt shaker and a beer coaster or anything else that was lying around, brought them together in a certain experimental arrangement and said to me, "That is all I want to say." Correlations as event. . . . For him, the correlations were significant.⁸²

For the artist, the meaning of these objects was that they were on their way to becoming something other through being moved, played with, exchanged with their neighbor, or exchanged with something completely new to the piece. Their utter ordinariness and invitation to tactile engagement promoted a kind of humble yet profoundly consequential mode of creative interactivity.

THE FLUXUS CONCRETE

I always talk about the cards in *Water Yam* as event-scores, like a musical score is a plan for realizing a piece of music, right? The event-scores, the cards in *Water Yam* are plans, or suggestions for realizing something concrete.

—GEORGE BRECHT⁸³

As recounted in this book's introduction, Maciunas and Patterson's proto-Fluxus concert, "Kleinen Sommerfest—Après John Cage," opened at Galerie Parnass

in Wuppertal, Germany, in June 1962 with a reading in German translation of Maciunas's manifesto-like text, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art," which took place in front of a huge chart that organized in diagrammatic fashion the relationships between the diverse work of the artists with whom Maciunas had been associated back home in New York (see figs. 13, 14).⁸⁴ Mapping the territory between the two poles of "time art" and "space art" were the categories of "literature," "graphics," "music," "theater," "happenings," and "environments." And under these umbrella terms appeared a staggering diversity of names: Jackson Mac Low, Emmett Williams, Henry Flynt, Larry Poons, Benjamin Patterson, Al Hansen, Claes Oldenburg, George Brecht, Dick Higgins, La Monte Young, Robert Morris, Walter De Maria, Allan Kaprow, Ray Johnson, and Stan VanDerBeek. According to Maciunas's logic, the motley group was unified by a common turn to the "concrete," a term he chose to privilege at the time over that of "object" or even "event":

Almost each category and each artist . . . is bound with the concept of Concretism ranging in intensity from pseudo concretism, surface concretism, structural concretism, method concretism (indeterminacy systems), to the extreme of concretism which is beyond the limits of art, and therefore sometimes referred to as anti-art, or art-nihilism. . . . The "anti-art" forms are directed primarily against art as a profession, against the artificial separation of a performer from audience, or creator and spectator, or life and art; it is against the artificial forms or patterns or methods of art itself; it is against the purposefulness, formfulness and meaningfulness of art; Anti-art is life, is nature, is true reality—it is one and all.⁸⁵

Higgins, who also understood concretism as a central concern within this milieu, offered this clarification two years later:

"Concrete" means: "Real, no ideal; Of or pertaining to immediate experience; physical, not abstract or general." If one wants one's work to be immediately striking and to avoid any of the dichotomy of an extraordinary situation, such as going to an expensive concert, as opposed to a daily sort of situation, such as walking around the house, if one wants this, one might well try to do the most concrete possible work.⁸⁶

Maciunas's and Higgins's statements calling for concrete art were not meant to revive the sort of geometric abstraction earlier advocated by a figure like De Stijl theorist Theo van Doesburg in the 1930s. Rather, in its most extreme versions, Fluxus concretism, like other parallel notions of concretism that emerged

in the 1960s, pursued a neo-dada logic of the readymade meant to strike against the illusionism and artificiality of most art.⁸⁷ In its place, Maciunas called for an art form proper to the “truly concrete artist” that would be, like Brecht’s infinitely rearrangeable objects and event scores, an “automatic machine.”⁸⁸ Maciunas saw in Brecht’s event scores an effective version of such an automatic machine, one that enabled the outlining of a form that could adopt as its content the material conditions of any given situation. Indeed, as Brecht noted in 1961, “Event-scores prepare one for an event to happen in one’s own ‘now.’”⁸⁹

While Maciunas posited the exemplary concretist work as a kind of automatic machine, Higgins, after nearly a decade of Fluxus work, described in complementary fashion the work of his peers as dealing in “blank images” and “blank structure” (1970), as if in direct opposition to Morris’s “blank forms” and their realization in minimalist sculpture:

One would take the “idea” for the work, and figure out its essence. Then try to make it into a “Blank structure,” whose structure might imply a whole ideology. . . . The structure would then be filled in with meaningful content, the individual performances being determined by whatever was meaningful by (and to) the individual performers.⁹⁰

The event score format widely adopted by Fluxus artists was just this kind of blank image or blank structure, an empty, abstract form accommodating to the shifting content a performer or beholder might bring to it and fully reliant upon that content to manifest its existence. Higgins further explained this operation in his 1976 “Exemplarist Manifesto,” in which he describes a practice that “stresses not the single realization as the work, but the dialectic between any single realization and its alternates.”⁹¹

Positing a model artwork in flux whose form is dynamic, relational, and always in transit—one might simply say fundamentally diagrammatic—Brecht’s active solicitation of the arrangement and rearrangement of his works entailed that they be resolutely material and embodied, existing by means of a perpetual interchange between the abstract sign and concrete object. In this, perhaps, there is a limit to Fluxus’s relatability to other object-based visual arts practices of the early 1960s, as well as to later “dematerialized” practices associated with conceptual art. The abstract-concrete dynamic that Brecht experimented with throughout his multifarious practice, and which became a hallmark of Fluxus, assumed the exchangeability of all things while always driving back toward what is materially immanent or concrete. This dialectical interchange between event and object explains how in the universe of Fluxus, an artwork could be derived from the observation of an everyday phenomenon, and this phenomenon could be transformed into a

string of words, and this string of words could become a person on a ladder dripping water from a pitcher, and this dripping water from a pitcher could become a sopping rag, and this sopping rag could become a leaky faucet, and this leaky faucet could become a scientific instrument—and on and on and on unceasingly, as Brecht's *Drip Music*, among the artist's many scores and objects, had demonstrated.

FOUR

George Maciunas, Fluxboxes, and the Transitional Commodity

As recounted in the prelude to this book, the earliest recorded public mention of Fluxus occurred in New York in 1961, uttered from the dais of the symposium accompanying the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *The Art of Assemblage*. The distinguished panelists were Lawrence Alloway, Roger Shattuck, Richard Huelsenbeck, Marcel Duchamp, and Robert Rauschenberg. During the Q&A period following the presenters' remarks, a write-in question submitted by George Maciunas implicitly defending "neo-dada music and theater" was read aloud by the exhibition's curator and panel moderator, William Seitz. Maciunas's name was mispronounced, and he was introduced as the editor of a "Fluxus" magazine that did not yet exist. This scenario—of a Fluxus artist speaking indirectly at an event celebrating better-known representatives of the most advanced art of the moment—was emblematic of Fluxus's perpetually marginal position in relation to more visible and celebrated strains of neo-avant-garde art.



Fig 38. Installation view, first Fluxus exhibition in the basement kitchen of Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, Germany, March 1963. Gelatin silver print. 16.1 x 24.4 cm. Collection AFORK, Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf. Photograph Manfred Leve / © Estate of Manfred Leve.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the earliest Fluxus exhibition took place in March 1963 in a basement kitchen, the province of the scullery maid (fig. 38). The display occupied the floor below Nam June Paik's first solo exhibition, *Exposition of Music–Electronic Television*, staged at Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, a hub for experimental art and music in West Germany. The (literally) underground presentation of Fluxus objects was something of a sideshow to the group's performance activities, more visible at the time even though Maciunas's intention was for the concerts to promote and raise funds for Fluxus's emerging publications program. On Paik's invitation and with only a day's notice, Maciunas (with help from Tomas Schmit) stocked the small quarters, already cluttered with furniture and storage boxes, with scores and small objects he had on hand. Whereas media attention was lavished on Paik's work displayed throughout the villa's stories above, one sole photograph by Manfred Leve documents Fluxus's "gallery" debut, in which the kitchen's walls and countertops were adapted as display surfaces for the collective's bizarre wares. The laconic event scores of George Brecht, which draw attention to everyday objects ("table," "keyhole," "exit," "light," and so on), were scattered about as curious labels for the room's features. Set atop the stove and countertops were Schmit's *Poems* (1963): plastic letters, dictionary pages, and dolls suspended in liquid in peanut butter jars to be shaken like a poor man's snow globe. There were Robert Watts's *Hospital Events* (1963), girlie pictures marked with numbered dots that viewers were to strike successively with a hammer. They did so with such enthusiasm that the tables quickly became dented, the pictures

destroyed. Maciunas had to write to Watts asking for more. There were also untold things from Ben Vautier. Trails of postcard-sized, printed manicule symbols designed by Maciunas after Brecht's event score *Direction* ("Arrange to observe a sign indicating direction of travel / ● travel in the indicated direction / ● travel in another direction"; 1963) snaked around the room, guiding visitors' attention from one object to the next. The combination of event scores and interactive, cleverly packaged multiples presented in this oubliette-like exhibition space immediately established the basic characteristics of the Fluxus object: small, tactile, interactive, antispectacular, and lowly, as well as collaboratively produced, containerized, and portable (quite necessary, as Maciunas was traveling across Europe from concert to concert by automobile).

The modest success of this initial Fluxus show encouraged Maciunas to integrate similar displays into future Fluxus concerts. He excitedly set about writing to his network: "Please send objects for exhibits," especially "small items for everyday use."¹ "Please *thing* up something of your own for such exhibits," Maciunas wrote, confusing or substituting "think" for "thing" as if deliberately to conflate the registers of conceptual and material production.² Fluxus object displays soon appeared alongside "A Little Festival of New Music" in July 1963 at Goldsmiths College in London and at a September 1965 program at Carnegie Recital Hall, among other Fluxus concert sites (fig. 39).³ Typically set out on open tables in lobbies and reception areas adjacent to the spaces where the main performance events took place, Fluxus objects were presented as a kind of souvenir merchandise for audience members to peruse and purchase between acts so they could perform at home their own do-it-yourself Fluxus activities. With this model of symbiotic, performance-related exhibition in mind, Brecht early on characterized his Fluxus-related works as "objects for lobby, foyer, aisles, washrooms of theatre[s]."⁴

Following the Galerie Parnass display, Fluxus objects became increasingly elaborate. Hybrid and multiple, Fluxus's "hand-held book-boxes" were an amalgam of score, book, and readymade, typically made in numerous, slightly varying copies.⁵ For Maciunas's promotional photograph of *Fluxus 1* (1964–1965), the earliest published anthology to carry the collective's name, he stood the book upright on its spine and observed it from above, splayed out fanlike (fig. 40). The accordion-fold brochure attached to the back cover, which contains the contributors' names as rendered by Maciunas in so many inscrutable logos, is shown cascading open. This aerial viewpoint, inspired by Constructivist photography, signaled Maciunas's belief in the published book-object (always a hyphenated, in-between entity) as a tool for reorienting understandings of the form and use of objects. Indeed, his vision for the Fluxus object became increasingly radicalized. By 1964, he was writing to Schmit of Fluxus's relationship to the Soviet LEF group of the 1920s, proclaiming that Fluxus's goals were in fact not aesthetic but social, aimed at the elimination of the work of art altogether. Like the Constructivists'



Fig 39. Peter Moore, photo of display of Fluxus Editions in lobby at Fluxorchestra concert at Carnegie Recital Hall, New York, September 25, 1965. Gelatin silver print. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, ARCH.XX.Fluxus. loan34. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. Photo © 2020 Barbara Moore / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY, courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

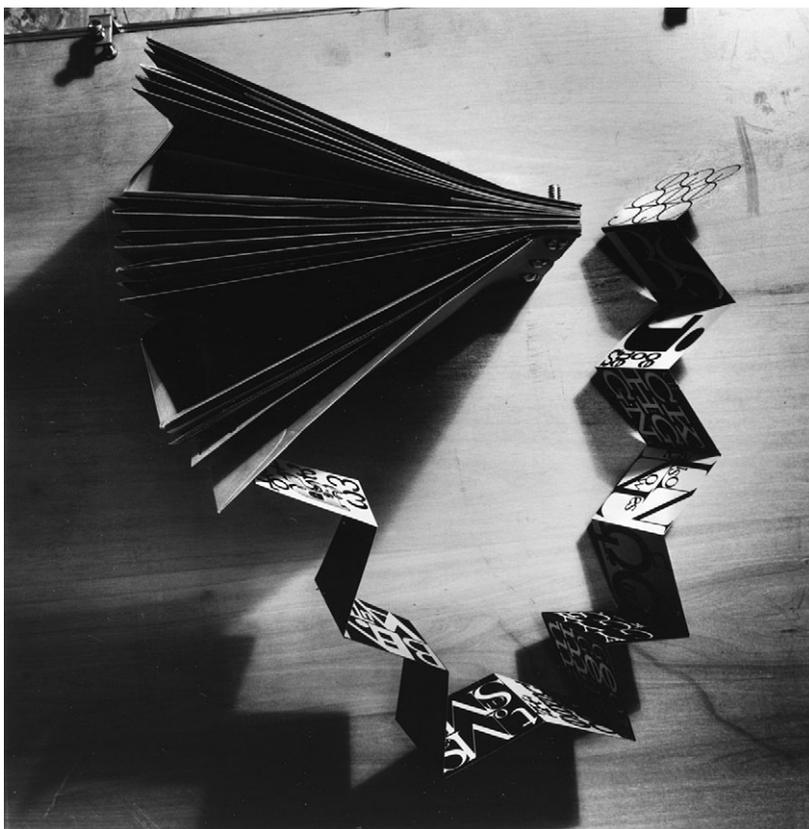


Fig 40. George Maciunas, photograph of *Fluxus 1*, 1965. Gelatin silver print. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 3096.2008. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. By permission of Billie J. Maciunas, PhD.

vision of “collective social objects” triumphing over “private fetishes,”⁶ Maciunas imagined Fluxus objects to have a “pedagogical function” that was “at best *transitional* (a few years) & temporary,” part of a larger project of “teaching people the needlessness of art” “until such time when fine art can be totally eliminated.”⁷ With their greatest output in the years 1964–1969, Fluxus artists—Maciunas chief among them—produced dozens of objects for international mail-order distribution through temporary Fluxshops established in New York, Amsterdam, and the south of France. Some of these ventures survived through the late 1960s, while the production, assembly, and distribution (through cobbled-together, hand-me-down mailing lists) of Fluxus multiples continued into the 1980s.⁸

Event scores and multiples, performances and objects, books and boxes, thoughts and things—how might we understand such diverse material production according to a common framework that can account for the Fluxboxes’ ephemeral and material qualities, as well as the intellectual ambitions behind this curious self-invented format? This chapter looks closely at the Fluxboxes as objects—their physical constitution, their relationship to event scores, and the modes of behavior and subjectivity they model.⁹ It situates Fluxboxes alongside experimental music, emergent notions of the 1960s object, the Pop art multiple, and narratives of modern sculpture to show how Fluxus objects critically responded to conventions of both modernist art and postwar commodity culture, intervening into the subject-object relations typically elicited by both. By necessity, I focus on Maciunas’s highly documented role in the design and realization of Fluxboxes, although I take his work to be emblematic of the aesthetics and modes of production that traverse many Fluxus artists’ engagement with the format. Extending his language, and drawing upon Marxist and psychoanalytic object theories, I introduce the term “transitional commodity” to draw out the Fluxboxes’ connection to a longer history of twentieth-century avant-garde reimaginings of the art object and its potential for transforming subjective and intersubjective experience both within and beyond the art world.

FLUXUS’S ALLOGRAPHIC OBJECTS

The Fluxus collective’s first publication, *Fluxus 1*, immediately problematized distinctions of printed matter versus three-dimensional object, score versus performance, and sequential book versus unstructured, open container (plate 6).¹⁰ If books, as handheld compendia of printed pages, engage both two- and three-dimensional experience, *Fluxus 1* emphasized its appeal to the latter and was often referred to by the artists as a book-object or book-box. Maciunas came up with the idea for such an unruly publication in late 1961, intended as the inaugural volume of seven anthologies that would chart a historical chronology and global itiner-

ary of the neo-avant-garde from Western Europe to Japan. Focused primarily on work made in the United States, *Fluxus 1* included surplus material from La Monte Young's groundbreaking compendium of post-Cagean scores and instructions, *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, which Maciunas as the book's designer took with him when he fled the United States and his debts in November 1961 to take up a graphic design job in Wiesbaden with the US military.¹¹ *Fluxus 1*'s basis on the remnants of a prior publication was embraced by Maciunas as a fitting theme for the entire collection. Along with contributions of essays, scores, graphics, films, flip-books (aka "poor man's films"), Maciunas solicited all manner of refuse: "original art, metal, plastic, wood objects, scraps of paper, clippings, junk, raggs [sic]"; "solid objects, scraps, collages, smears, junk, garbage, rags, ready-makes [sic], found objects etc."¹² Surpassing *An Anthology of Chance Operations* with its innovative design, the resulting three-dimensional book-like compendium was able, in the words of Maciunas, "to permit inclusion of many loose items. . . . Any composition or work that cannot be reproduced in standard sheet form or cannot be reproduced at all."¹³

Borrowing from but also expanding quite literally on the conventional format of the book, *Fluxus 1* was made from manila envelopes and various kinds of papers bound together with nuts and bolts and housed in a small wooden crate. It can be handled like a book but with the added feature that one can also open, unbind, and rearrange the pages.¹⁴ Event scores form much of the book's content as printed leaves or loose cards gathered in the envelope-pages, but there are also instances in which the proximity of score and object closes the gap between instruction and performance such that the viewer is provided with the means to enact the score *in situ* as a literalization of action poetry. Vautier contributed a page printed with the phrase "Turn this page," the other side of which says, "This was a gesture piece by Ben." His *Mystery Envelope* appears with its flap bolted into the binding so that in order to open it, the viewer must disassemble the entire book, an effort that disappointingly, perhaps even cruelly, turns up only a small card printed with the artist's name. Other works venture further into three dimensions, such as Ay-O's *Finger Hole*, a miniature manila envelope with a slit cut into its surface, allowing the packet's bulging contents (soft black tulle) to force open the incision just enough for the reader to "put finger in hole" as the printed label instructs. One can also pull from an envelope-page a plastic medical glove contributed by Alison Knowles, printed with the words "to be worn while examining." In joining the notational object with the naturally participatory format of the book, *Fluxus 1* transformed the experience of reading and beholding into a performative, haptic, and collaborative encounter characteristic of the many Fluxboxes that would come.

Each page of *Fluxus 1* was an individual object with potential to be manipulated, recalling Brecht's experiments with card decks as well as aspects of *An*

Anthology of Chance Operations. The latter had highlighted the tactile nature of the book as object with such contributions as Dieter Roth's *Poem Machine*, a page with die-cut holes meant to organize readymade texts into poetry, or the pasted-in envelope containing Young's graphic score *Composition 1960 #9*, a card printed with a singular horizontal line. In general, Fluxus publications prioritized the material qualities of event scores and other printed matter over their existence merely as language and/or image. They were meant to be perceived within a multidimensional environment, inspired by the performance context from which they emerged.

As we have seen, certain New York School experiments in graphic notation had already pushed the score in this direction. Although Earle Brown's *December 1952* was never realized as the mechanical score-in-motion the composer initially imagined (see chapter 1), Brown's invitation to performers to read the score in multiple orientations triggered a revised understanding of its utility and heightened awareness of its existence as a paper object. Manipulation of the paper support was integral to the process of interpretation and performance. Cage's *Variations* series, printed on transparencies, required shuffling, sorting, and stacking, and his "Indeterminacy" lectures at Darmstadt praised Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI* mainly (if only) for its unconventionally large, scroll-like format, which required it to be transported in a cardboard tube.¹⁵ Cage's prepared-piano piece *Sonatas and Interludes* of 1948, with its accompanying box containing all the required hardware filed into individual, carefully annotated envelopes, had already exploded the score format into three dimensions.

Equally crucial to understanding Fluxus publications are the ways in which the performative aspects of these works extended to their mode of production. Fluxboxes were typically the collaborative output of individual artists and Maciunas as publisher, who could take dramatic liberties with a work's final execution. Copies of *Fluxus 1*, for example, were produced piecemeal over the course of fourteen years beginning in 1963, around the time of Paik's Galerie Parnass exhibition. As a result, their contents are not always consistent. Already in January 1965, Maciunas was writing in desperation to Vautier: "We ran out of your 'bag over the head' then ran out of small booklets you sent, then ran out of record labels, so we have NOTHING FROM YOU TO PUT IN FLUXUS 1 !!! So please send a quantity of your contribution. Send anything you like."¹⁶ As rare-books dealer and art historian Barbara Moore explains:

Maciunas effected changes right up to the last copies he made, a few months before his death. . . . These modifications might be due to any number of reasons: a new artist discovered and his or her piece added; an artistic squabble which ended with Maciunas making an excision; certain entries getting lost or becoming out-of-print.¹⁷



Fig 41. Ben Vautier, prototype and various copies of *Flux Holes*, 1964 (Fluxus Edition, New York). Plastic boxes with offset labels, containing offset cards and objects in various media, various dimensions. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Vautier's prototype is labeled "trou portatif Ben," and the adjacent plaque dating to 1984 reads "1964 Portable hole as I proposed it to Maciunas." Art © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Rather than an editorial flaw, the condition that the publication “would always change, always be different, always be really itself,” as Dick Higgins later described, reflected Maciunas’s interest in associating Fluxus, in name and in practice, with perpetual change.¹⁸

The handcrafted, one-off prototypes submitted to Maciunas for reduplication as Fluxus editions typically reemerged as cheap, mass-produced counterparts. Vautier’s *Trou Portatif* (*Flux Holes*) (1964), a black wooden case cut through with a hole, became plastic boxes filled with photographs, hole-punched cards, straws, and varied utilitarian items from the hardware store (fig. 41). His *Dirty Water* (1963), a mason jar of sewagey liquid, became medicine bottles fitted with eyedroppers and filled with an ink-like fluid. George Brecht’s *Closed on Mondays* (1969), prototyped in 1966 as a wooden box bearing an industrially produced sign on its lid and held shut by an internally mounted rubber band, ultimately became a plastic box glued permanently shut and labeled with a montage of schoolchildren idling in the street, surrounded by graffiti spelling out the box’s title and author (see fig. 54). Such disparities between prototype and finished Fluxproduct led many collaborators, such as Benjamin Patterson, to see Maciunas as “a plagiarist and ‘arranger’ of the ideas of others.”¹⁹ Maciunas’s Fluxus workshop churned out objects based on other artists’ concepts, sometimes without explicit permission, with some discovering their ideas had been realized as Fluxus editions only many years later. Maciunas’s cavalier attitude about the consistency of Fluxus editions frustrated some artists, who complained that “the contents did not really matter



Fig 42. Willem de Ridder, *European Mail-Order Warehouse/Fluxshop*, showing shop inventory with Dorothea Meijer, seated, in the home of de Ridder, Amsterdam, winter 1964–1965. Photo © Wim van der Linden / MAI (Maria Austria Instituut, Amsterdam).

to him so long as he had the opportunity to produce a box,” while others enjoyed the convenience of sending off prototypes to be realized through the labor of someone else.²⁰ Not all Fluxboxes passed through Maciunas’s design aesthetic or hands, however, which further accounts for their variability. Knowles’s *Bean Rolls* (1963–1964), housed in metal tea canisters, were assembled by the artist and her mother, and in 1963 Maciunas sent unassembled Fluxbox materials to Amsterdam for Willem de Ridder to compile before making them available through his European Mail-Order Warehouse (fig. 42).

Such choices, which on the surface level may seem to have been made simply for the sake of convenience and thrift, amounted to an uncommonly radical approach to authorship, labor, production, and distribution of the art object for the time. Maciunas's collaborative approach to "arranging" the ideas of others, characteristic of Fluxus artists' collaborative approach to authorship and recalling the late 1950s object-arrangements of Brecht, cannot be understood without reference to concurrent experimental music practices. Fluxus artists challenged the processes and protocols of artistic production under a mid-twentieth-century modernist paradigm with the same qualities of indeterminacy and ambiguity that New York School composers such as John Cage and Earle Brown—teachers and role models for many Fluxus people—had engaged to trouble conventions of music composition and performance. As I have argued in previous chapters, Fluxus production of both scores and objects was informed by ontological notions of the work of art common to the discipline of music, in which it is the norm for author-work relations to be mediated by a performer following delegated instructions, and the work necessarily is realized in multiple iterations. Such an approach differed fundamentally from the conventionally autographic arts of modernist painting and sculpture in that the artwork, newly iterative, could exist in potentially infinite, varying versions produced and circulated apart from the artist's hand. Understanding Fluxus multiples as the outcome of an allographic mode of object production enables us to account for the centrality of a highly active designer/arranger/publisher figure like Maciunas without identifying Fluxus exclusively with his ideas or aesthetic. In Fluxus's radical reconceptualization of the art object as an allographic entity, the work becomes a collective improvisation divorced from the control, taste, and authenticating power of the original artist-composer. The result is the paradoxical centrality of objects to a model of neo-avant-garde, anti-object artistic practice that would seemingly intend to do away with objects altogether.

The correlation of the allographic formats of the score and the multiple was in many ways already written into Maciunas's biography. All the disciplines of his training—design, architecture, and music—involve collaborative, multistep processes of planning and implementation. Maciunas studied art, graphic design, and architecture at Cooper Union in 1949, followed by studies in architecture and musicology at the Carnegie Institute of Technology and experimental composition at the New School with Richard Maxfield. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s he supported himself, his mother, and Fluxus with freelance graphic design jobs, and in the early 1960s he worked in the products and planning division of the modern furniture company Knoll Associates.²¹ Acting at times as artist, editor, commissioner, designer, publisher, and dealer, his Fluxus activities collapsed several roles in the production process that in other creative domains typically remained separate. At the same time, while procedurally Maciunas's approach to design may

have mirrored, for example, the composer-performer relations of performance (the artists' object prototypes aligning with the score and Maciunas aligning with the role of the performer), the prototypes were not treated in the manner of a definitive origin or master text but merely as the first in a never-ending succession of differing versions of a work whose relations to one another were nonhierarchical and whose authorship was thrown into question at every turn, culminating in an ever-expanding constellation of iterations, each one informing and encouraging the next.

Maciunas's loose design and production model was a fitting adaptation into object production of a Fluxus performance culture—exemplified by Paik's errant interpretation in Wiesbaden of Young's *Composition 1960 #10 to (Bob Morris)*—in which artists were encouraged to perform one another's pieces (see fig. 8). If Jackson Pollock's engagement with chance procedures had been to invite gravity to shape his painterly mark, and Cage's indeterminacy was achieved by means of randomizing rule systems, the Fluxus means of accessing chance was to pass the work through the interpretations of multiple subjects. Such a practice rhymes with the kind of "distributed authorship" musicologist Benjamin Piekut has observed in experimental music partnerships such as Cage and David Tudor's, as well as in the performance cultures of improvisation and rock, in which "the conception, meaning, and sound-world of a given composition is shared across multiple subjectivities."²² Experimental interpretations of a fellow artist's score pressed the formal limits of an individual work along with the constantly shifting, consensus-driven social and aesthetic limits of what defined Fluxus as a collective, affording a logic to the group's practice that Hannah Higgins has fittingly called "flexible nominalism."²³ While the Fluxus approach to object-making was clearly positioned as a radical alternative to modernist precedents, it also offered an alternative to other neo-avant-garde object formats of its time, such as Pop's highly formal assemblages or minimalism's gestalt structures. In insisting on material instantiation while evading material fixity, Fluxus's objects without a fixed object-status—its collaboratively produced, insistently *unspecific* objects—already pointed to some of the most extreme limit-testing of artistic value, materiality, and authorship that would be explored in conceptualist practices to emerge much later in the decade.

THE FLUXBOX VS. THE POP MULTIPLE

By the autumn of 1963, Maciunas was back in New York after being forced out of his design job in Wiesbaden because the US military was no longer willing to pay the chronically ill artist's medical bills (or so Maciunas claimed). He moved into a second-story loft at 359 Canal Street in Soho and divided the space in two,

establishing both a Fluxhall performance space and a Fluxshop for the publication and distribution of Fluxus objects (see fig. 53). The establishment of the Fluxshop marked a shift in emphasis of Maciunas's efforts toward the production of objects, following a series of events in 1963–1964 that threatened the group's cohesion. Maciunas's increasingly assertive plans included the demand that artists give exclusive rights for all past, present, and future works to Fluxus in order to present a "common front" as well as proposing bold, agitprop interventions and disruptions of public transportation, postal, and radio communications systems and of events at galleries, museums, and theaters.²⁴ Many artists in the Fluxus network balked at his propositions. Maciunas thus began to see the advantages of publishing over organizing concerts, and from 1964 to 1968 focused his efforts there. The audience for published works was potentially much greater, did not involve expensive and time-consuming travel, and allowed Maciunas to maintain a regular work schedule in order to finance them. In retrospect, it seems that the consolidation of Fluxus object production coincided with the beginning of the group's dispersal. With this shift, however, Fluxus practice was able more pointedly to address prevailing object models in the aesthetic and social fields at a time of great transformation in the postwar West. Not fully identifiable as sculptures or commodities or everyday tools, and yet evoking all of these categories simultaneously, Fluxus multiples entered into critical dialogue with several kinds of objects and object-experience at once.

Maciunas's Fluxshop was located conveniently opposite a post office on a street dotted with job-lot and dime stores carrying the cheap, cast-off, readymade items that he collected for future use. It was also situated directly above Canal Plastics, one provider of the compartmentalized boxes that gave the Fluxboxes their standardized dimensions. The box format was indebted to Brecht's participatory object-assemblages of 1959–1961, such as *The Case* and *Repository*, which housed found objects in box-like containers that could be opened to permit physical interaction, thus recasting the readymade as an interactive, notational object (see plates 4 and 5).²⁵ When Maciunas acquired his first bulk order of plastic boxes and invited artists to propose contents for them, naturally he found that Brecht "was the first one to respond and he came up with lots of little boxes, with games and puzzles and things like that."²⁶

To fill the boxes, Maciunas lovingly collected, preserved, and catalogued the cast-offs to be found up and down the shops of Canal Street, where the excess of 1960s mass production, the material waste of late capitalist society, accumulated before realizing some latent use-value and sneaking back into the consumer economy or heading, finally, to the garbage dump. No wonder the artist Lee Lozano, one of the area's loft-dwellers at the time, referred to Canal as the "asshole" of New York.²⁷ Maciunas purchased items in bulk, the plastic boxes a gross at a time. As Knowles has recounted, in the gleefully acquisitive eyes of Maciunas, "These

small objects in barrels were multiples in themselves.”²⁸ Instead of looking for the marvelous among cast-offs, the objects selected for inclusion in future Fluxboxes seemed overwhelmingly to sympathize with the low. In line with the rear-guard aesthetic Maciunas promoted, Fluxboxes celebrated the old, outmoded, and arcane, and pledged their troth to the tacky and utterly worthless stuff of everyday life, the result of which was that they seemed to be always already relics—broken, obsolete, and degraded. Here is Knowles again: “Anything can, after all, become art, particularly (George might say) if it’s worthless or separated from its practical context (like half a pair of scissors).”²⁹ By 1967, when Maciunas relocated to 349 West Broadway, the object inventory occupying his studio storeroom was in itself an enormous Fluxbox, stacked high with cardboard boxes labeled and organized according to an idiosyncratic system: wood, hardware, graphic samples, rubber, utensils, vessels, dishes, optics, acoustics, linen, medicine, and eggshells. And inside these boxes were the countless gewgaws and thingamajigs Maciunas had salvaged from the bins of C&K Surplus, Columbia Surplus, and Canal Hardware nearby: eyedroppers, pill jars, rubber bands, paper clips, old toys, pieces of plastic, dried mushrooms, mahjong tablets, shards of mirror, feathers, rivets, golf tees, thread, test tubes, grinders, corks, pill capsules, lenses, pebbles, keys, beads, nuts, bolts, shells, belt buckles, and more.

Maciunas called the New York Fluxshop a mail-order warehouse, giving the impression of a massive operation with stockpiles of goods waiting to be shipped out, but in fact art history’s conception of Fluxus as a project of “infinite overproduction” aligns more with the artists’ ideals than the reality, which was more akin to what Owen Smith has called “small-scale opportunism.”³⁰ As the collective’s self-appointed commissioning publisher, Maciunas approached artists directly, asking them what they might do with his supply of papers, plastic boxes, and trinkets. “I just handed [the boxes] to everybody and I said, how about doing something with them?”³¹ The labels Maciunas designed, typeset, and printed himself. In later years, he would send around photocopied inventories of the items in his storehouse from which artists could select the contents for their soon-to-be-reduplicated works. Thus Fluxboxes often existed only *in potentia* as so many parts lying in wait in the jars and boxes of Maciunas’s studio, to be assembled one by one over extended periods of time, as we saw with the example of *Fluxus 1*. The “warehouse” inventory consisted of a few preassembled samples dwarfed by an overstuffed closet stacked to the ceiling with boxes of all the necessary supplies. Maciunas and his team responded to orders one at a time, instigating a process in which they would go fossicking through the wares, plucking out all the labels, cards, and objects necessary to compile an individual kit.

Fluxus editions were completed in small batches with whatever was on hand. In this way, rather than a high-tech Fordist factory churning out goods of universal design, Fluxus production corresponded more to the model of a premod-

ern artisanal guild, in which handcrafted items were produced one at a time by skilled makers in control of multiple stages of the production process. The ragtag production team of New York Fluxus consisted, at various times, of Maciunas, Schmit, de Ridder, Takako Saito, and Sara Seagull, whose craftwork skills were applied to reintroducing the waste of industry back into the consumer economy. In contrast to the expansive, assembly-line industry of Andy Warhol's Factory or the turn by artists such as Donald Judd, Robert Morris, and Walter De Maria to industrial fabrication methods, Fluxus never attempted similar innovations.³² And while the rhetoric of Fluxus news bulletins, promotional announcements, and international sales correspondence seemed to reflect an interest in more sophisticated modes of production and distribution, the group's reliance on mail-order circulation and the aesthetics of its editions corresponded rather to the low-culture, low-value sphere of Canal Street. The Fluxboxes sold cheaply, for the most part between one and ten dollars, and were advertised via gimmicky broadsheets. Their lowbrow tackiness deliberately trod the line of good taste in contradistinction to the "cool" art of the day: Pop, minimalism, and hard-edge painting. Fluxus objects were keyed to an economic and cultural context of mass production, consumption, and planned obsolescence in comparison to which its output was deliberately retrograde. Maciunas would later brag of the New York Fluxshop's failure, saying, "We had it open I think almost all year. We didn't make one sale in that whole year."³³

The artisanal, on-demand production of Fluxus's downmarket objects should be understood in critical relation to the industrial methods and materials utilized in the production of artist-designed, limited-edition prints and multiples by ventures such as Multiples Inc., with which Maciunas felt he was in competition (but to which he consigned Fluxus editions). Among other enterprises established during the international multiples boom of 1965–1967, Multiples Inc. specialized in the production and sale of multiples and other artist-designed items that catered to the expanding market for Pop art by further exploiting the commercial appeal and logic of that work. Established by Marian Goodman in partnership with Barbara Kulicke, Robert Graham, Sonny Sloan, and Ursula Kalish, and opened on Madison Avenue just two doors down from where Maciunas's AG Gallery once stood, Multiples Inc. offered "prints, portfolios, posters, jewelry, sculptures, objects, boxes, banners" "by well-known artists in carefully supervised, signed, and numbered editions," from cloisonné jewelry designed by Roy Lichtenstein to sculptural reliefs in vacuum-formed vinyl by Claes Oldenburg.³⁴ Works were consigned from the Betsy Ross Flag and Banner Co., Daniel Spoerri's Édition MAT, Rosa Esman's Tanglewood Press/Original Editions, and the Kulicke Cloisonné Workshop. In these same years, gallerist Richard Feigen launched a temporary multiples outlet at Bonwit-Teller department store, and curator Joan Kron appeared on the Johnny Carson show with multiples from her 1967 exhibition

Museum of Merchandise, organized in Philadelphia with Audrey Sabol.³⁵ With their handy scale, portability, and incorporation of packaging into their overall design, multiples in general were meant to intervene in consumer object relations more directly and effectively than had previous neo-dada sculptural incorporations of the readymade. Proponents of multiples, including the more radicalized German publishers René Block and Wolfgang Feelisch, felt the new medium provided a revolutionary model of accessibility and affordability until, as Goodman herself admitted, “It turned out that the people who buy prints [and multiples] are the same people who buy everything else.”³⁶ Within the decade, Lichtenstein’s pins were being resold at an 800 percent markup. It appeared that despite their promise, multiples had amounted to nothing more than a quirky fad, so many curious bibelots to decorate the coffee tables and mantels of collectors whose walls were already overhung with splashy Pop canvases.

Arguably, the willingness of the art world to embrace multiples and prints depended on the implementation of strict standards of production and attribution that required the artist to maintain physical and conceptual control over the work at all times.³⁷ If the multiple’s characteristic non-uniqueness threatened to compromise its value, legitimacy, or authenticity as art, other features were amplified as if expressly to compensate for this potential deficit. Value was guaranteed and fortified by size (graphic banners on the scale of paintings), material (precious cloisonné enamel), function (jewelry), or technical complexity and novelty of production (vacuum-formed plastics and motorized kinetic sculptures). Even the objects distributed under Spoerri’s *Édition MAT*, perhaps the closest model at the time to the Fluxus multiple, were strictly limited in edition, hewed to interactive and changeable forms as a means of artificially charging the work with uniqueness, and were solicited from members of the historical avant-garde—namely Duchamp—in order to lend legitimacy to works by younger artists.³⁸

Notably, there was in this moment a historical reversal at play, in which the emergence of the multiple in the 1960s made possible the republication and multiplication of many of Duchamp’s earlier works. In past decades, Duchamp had remade several of his readymades as they were lost or destroyed, but they were not replicated in significant quantities until the neo-dada moment of the 1950s and 1960s brought renewed interest in his work, establishing the readymade as a legitimate (anti-)sculptural form rather than a one-off provocation. The gallerist Arturo Schwartz alone was responsible for the reproduction in number of fourteen of Duchamp’s readymades between 1964 and 1965.³⁹ Reconstructions after photographs, plans, drawings, and instructions were overseen by the artist, who abandoned his earlier position of professed indifference toward the objects in recognition that the “custom-made editioned replicas” of his readymades had already been recuperated as sculpture.⁴⁰ As Duchamp explained in this later moment, in

recognition of the transformed conditions of reception for his work, “The readymades were a way of getting out of the exchangeability, the monetarization of the work of art, which was just beginning about then. In art, and only in art, the original work is sold, and it acquires a sort of aura that way. But with my readymades a replica will do just as well.”⁴¹ With the readymade, as well as his numerous works that referenced books and scores, Duchamp had wanted “to wipe out the idea of the original, which exists neither in music nor in poetry: plenty of manuscripts are sold, but they are unimportant.”⁴² In other words, in order to escape the construct of the unique, autographic object, he reasoned, artists would have to appeal to the allographic. (In Duchamp’s case, however, his complicity in the meticulous reproduction of his readymades served to reinstate and solidify their status as single-authored works of art.)

Meanwhile, Fluxboxes were produced in edition, but they did not adhere to any recognizable standard. Representing a peculiar mode of errant allographism, they were neither strictly limited in number nor composed of exact copies. Fluxboxes were unnumbered, unlimited, internally varied, collectively produced, and in some cases even anonymous. Where the artist’s signature does appear, it is often as a self-conscious joke, as in Vautier’s gesture of signing “everything” and Watts’s rendering the signatures of Ingres, Duchamp, and Picasso in neon and on baseballs. The Fluxus multiple was problematically and ambiguously situated between the models of unique art object and highly regulated multiple, abiding by the standards of neither one. The unattributed Fluxus multiple, *Fresh Goods from the East* (1964), for instance, contained whatever latest items had come across Maciunas’s desk, thus incorporating variability as the foundation for its material and conceptual design. It was a work whose authorship Maciunas never claimed, further undermining its potential commercial value.

MULTIPLE MODES OF TOUCH

We can see in a photograph taken by Maciunas of his Fluxus wares the chairman’s celebration of the aberrant editions and their chaotic organization. A jumble of Fluxboxes is strewn out across the floor; their contents spill out over and into one another, intermingling, making it unclear where one work ends and another begins (fig. 43). As with his photograph of *Fluxus 1*, the works are observed from above, occupying a space of tactile engagement, handiwork, and exploration. Maciunas’s cluttered display was keyed to the low-end retail environments of Canal Street and a working-class consumer audience that, as Cécile Whiting has described, “selected goods through the sensory mode of touch rather than relying on vision.”⁴³ Fluxboxes demanded to be touched, eliciting through their form and contents modes of haptic engagement that exceeded the casual fondling and



Fig 43. George Maciunas, *Products for Fluxus editions*, 1964. Gelatin silver print. Image: 19 1/8 × 18 7/8 in. (48.5 × 48 cm); sheet: 23 7/8 × 19 7/8 in. (60.7 × 50.5 cm). Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2437.2008. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. By permission of Billie J. Maciunas, PhD.

admiring of the everyday shopper. One certain means of achieving this effect was the absorption of the container as an integral structuring element of the work such that the encounter necessarily begins with procedures of opening, unpacking, and (re)arranging. Fluxboxes are meant to be activated by the viewer, who is invited to handle, open up, and performatively shift around the contents. As a result, the functions and meanings of the objects contained within are drastically multiplied as they are thrust into relation with seemingly unlike objects and functions, able

to be transported from place to place, moving happily from the bookshelf to the coffee table to your rucksack.

To properly experience a Fluxbox is to physically intervene in its material disposition. By contrast, the grid-like display shelving that dominated one wall of Multiples Inc. segregated one work from the next, with many of its modules functioning as vertical surfaces for the exhibition of miniature wall-based or upright works with a primarily optical address (fig. 44). The implicit invitation to touch a multiple in such contexts became provisional in light of preservationist demands of the collector and conventions pertaining to the proper behavior of visitors to an art exhibition. An emblematic episode occurred at the Bianchini Gallery's 1964 exhibition, *The American Supermarket*, a cheeky installation of Pop multiples that mimicked the bright and orderly merchandizing of the supermarket, with its pristine towers and rows of canned goods, fruit, and veg. Jasper Johns's *Painted Bronze (Ale Cans)* (1960) was shown alongside Watts's chromed and flocked eggs and Warhol's signed Campbell's soup cans, until the work was removed by its owner, Robert Scull, who complained, "I just don't want people touching them . . . When the gallery makes a protective covering for them, I'll bring them back."⁴⁴

Fittingly, perhaps, the 1965 *Fluxkit*—the second major Fluxus anthology to appear and arguably the Fluxbox par excellence—was displayed at Multiples Inc. as a bottom-shelf item (plate 7). An elaborate compendium of boxes within a box, the *Fluxkit* takes the form of a leather attaché case with customized partitions that organize its contents tightly, among which one finds numerous small plastic



Fig 44. Interior of Multiples Inc., c. 1966, 929 Madison Avenue, New York, from a promotional brochure distributed by Multiples Inc. Photographer unknown. Collection of the Getty Research Institute library, Los Angeles (1393-631).

Fluxboxes such as Vautier's *Flux Holes*. Inside one such version of *Flux Holes*, next to the photo cards picturing a drain, a keyhole, the bell of a brass instrument, and a fractured brick wall, there is a quasi-abstract image that edges the series into a darker register. It is inscrutable, calling up a variety of obscene suggestions—a clogged nostril, a plugged-up toilet, a ball-gag in a mouth. Meanwhile, the *Fluxkit*'s version of *Fresh Goods from the East* contains six tiny purses, like mini patent-leather holsters, each containing a single earphone. These are the plugs to Vautier's holes, and there are four more of them than the ears can accommodate, suggesting other uses for other bodily orifices. Ay-O's *Finger Box* tempts a vulnerable digit to feel its hidden contents (in this case, soft foam). There is also Vautier's *Dirty Water*, reeking of ink and earth, equipped with a glass dropper so that we may drip, lick, suck, administer, insert, and so forth. Patterson's *Instruction No. 2*, containing a small soap and a disposable washcloth printed with the phrase "Please wash your face," seems a joke on his Fluxpeers' invited transgressions.

The sexual, violent, infantile, and scatological tenor of the *Fluxkit*'s contents is underscored by the recurrence of antique graphics culled by Maciunas from the image collections of the New York Public Library and by Watts from a book of nineteenth-century French medical engravings. In Watts's *Events*, a boxed collection of his event scores that is included in the *Fluxkit*, one card depicts a diagram of a laboratory setup that positions a dripping burette over a man's open eyes; another shows a naked woman, seemingly mid-orgasm, about to be cut up on an operating table. Issues of the Fluxus newspaper *cc V TRE* affixed to the underside of the kit's lid abound with plays in graphic grotesquerie that indicate a fixation on the perverse that extends beyond the collection of objects at hand. The January 1964 issue's front page includes an appropriated graphic of an obsolete apparatus for performing a bedside enema. We see it being demonstrated by a happy customer alongside a display of the tool, laid out as if on a mail-order catalogue page. The back page of the February 1964 issue is dominated by Dieter Roth's *Poem Machine*, instructing handlers to cut along the dotted line to produce a void in the crown of Roth's bald head (fig. 45). "Cut hole in head along dotted line to produce Dieter Roth's 'Poem Machine,'" it says, an aggressive gesture toward the artist, one that would create another hole for the handler of the kit—another hole through which to let loose, another hole to replug.

For Fluxus's third and last fully executed anthology, *Flux Year Box 2* (first assembled in 1967), Maciunas made a call to artists to send him works that, in the manner of Brecht's notational objects, would be realized "automatically" as the handler inspected the collection (plate 8).⁴⁵ Much like the *Fluxkit*, it was a partitioned box, but this time made entirely of wood and containing only a small assortment of Fluxboxes and several dozen scores. Vautier's *Flux Holes* are present as a set of white rubber bands. There is also Shigeko Kubota's *Flux Medicine* (1966), a supply of empty, transparent pill capsules; Ken Friedman's



Fig 45. George Brecht and the Fluxus Editorial Council, cc V TRE (detail), February 1964. Fluxus newspaper no. 2. Detail of back page featuring Dieter Roth's *Poem Machine*. Offset on paper. 22 1/2 x 17 1/2 in. (57.2 x 44.5 cm). Jean Brown papers, 1916–1995 (bulk 1958–1985), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (890164 and 2016.M.14).

Flux Corsage (1966), a handful of seeds; and Vautier's *Total Art Matchbox* (1965), a tiny but insidious object calling for the destruction of all museums, art libraries, readymades, and Pop art. There is the same intermingling of gag humor, scatology, eroticism, and violence that we have seen before. What is new in *Flux Year Box 2* is the introduction of cinema, rendered strangely tactile and sculptural through the inclusion of a handheld viewer for film loops authored by Watts, John Cale, Yoko Ono, Paul Sharits, and Wolf Vostell. Here, cinema is broken down, rendered into the experience of watching a slow succession of images that, with difficulty, click past a tiny viewfinder cupped awkwardly to the eye. Cinema within the *Year Box* is about touch as much as image—there is the unraveling of the loops, holding them up to the light, thumbing them up, loading the plastic device, slowly turning the crank, tugging the ribbon along (hoping it does not tear), exchanging the loop for another and another, and then—finally—regathering the loops, thumbing them up some more, and stuffing them back into a narrow, ill-fitting slot.

According to Maciunas's vision, Fluxus was to be an outpouring of low-cost art goods that luxuriated in base humor, and so it was not insignificant to him that the word *flux* can describe bodily excretion. But this connection extended to the work of other Fluxus artists as well. There is of course Vautier's *Dirty Water* and *Flux Holes* labeled by Maciunas with the image of a prodded asshole; Robert Filliou's *Fluxhair* and *Fluxdust* (c. 1966–1968); and Knowles's works with the cheap and lowly bean, including *Bean Rolls* and a cooked bean dish that Maciunas delighted in referring to as "shit porridge." There is also Maciunas's *Excreta Fluxorum* (1973), a Fluxbox containing specimens of animal and insect excrement labeled and organized according to species, the product of a continuing obsession with bodily excreta that would culminate in the inclusion of giant hunks of elephant dung in the largest Fluxbox ever to be constructed, the human-sized *Fluxlabyrinth* erected in Berlin in 1976. Such works were central to Fluxus's sardonic rear-guard attack on bourgeois modern art and the institutionalization of postwar avant-gardes. There were meant to be many more kits and yearboxes, but *Flux Year Box 2* was Maciunas's last major edition of collected Fluxus works before illness and debt began to catch up with him.

FLUX HOLES

As scholars of Fluxus have variously elaborated, Fluxboxes often stage physically transgressive interactions that elide the boundaries between subject and object.⁴⁶ But how are we to contextualize such object-relations within existing histories of modern and contemporary art? Accounts of the radical redefinition of the sculptural object in postwar art have typically focused on the expansion and dispersal

of the work of art in time and space while overlooking Fluxus production almost entirely. Rosalind Krauss, in *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (1977), characterized minimalism, post-minimalism, and earthworks as newly emphasizing bodily experience through expanded relations of space, scale, and time, while simultaneously destabilizing the viewer's sense of bodily centeredness and control.⁴⁷ We are pointed to a succession of surfaces, one example after another of materials and meaning rendered opaque: Auguste Rodin's unreadable bodies, Constantin Brancusi's immaculately reflective abstract forms, Francis Picabia's blinding light backdrop for the ballet *Relâche*. To these we could add Judd's aluminum boxes, Morris's mirrored cubes, and even, perhaps, the sun glinting off the Great Salt Lake between the coils of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*. At the same time that these surfaces' seductive veneers provoke desire, they deny narrative coherence, registering only the movement of the perceiving body through time and space. On the other hand, the account given by Jack Burnham in *Beyond Modern Sculpture* (1968) describes a transformation of sculpture in which the art object dissociates from the ontological status of the object altogether.⁴⁸ A sculptural tradition of the object defined by durability, presence, situatedness, and formalism is undone by a new model of sculpture as system—kinetic, optic, environmental, cybernetic—held together as a quasi-object by field-structuring relations organized by technology, vision, or both. In either account, touch is implicitly denied, as the expanded field opened by the new sculpture (or anti-sculpture, as the case may be) creates a vertiginous, uncertain, anti-mnemonic space into which the viewer is thrust. Only very recently have art historians begun to articulate a history of sculpture that would embrace actual touching and interactivity, likely due to the continued dominance of a Greenbergian paradigm resolutely hostile to actual—as opposed to merely imagined—physical interactivity.⁴⁹

In addition to the phenomenological and systems models offered by Krauss and Burnham, Benjamin Buchloh has described a semiotic model in which the materiality and three-dimensionality of the sculptural object are overcome by the power of sign exchange value. His account offers a refined definition of the sculpturally induced vertigo described by Krauss by proposing a two-part model between which recent sculpture may be situated: the commodity fetish and the logic of the spectacle. Duchamp's readymades prefigured this situation, having brought sculpture, to the destruction of its monumentality and commemorative capacity, near to both the sign and the fetish in one and the same gesture. "Sculpture," Buchloh writes, "is thus constituted in an uneasy balanced double reference, operating simultaneously in a discursive/semiotic space and in a social political space."⁵⁰ Any critical engagement with the two enforced terms of object experience—sign and fetish—must invent a means of "critical interpellation" by which demythologized historical consciousness may reemerge to combat the amnesia and indifference induced by the cultural conditions of late capitalism.⁵¹

We are left to wonder where the Fluxboxes might fit into these narratives of sculpture as a particular kind of object. What kind of model do they present in the face of the fetish and the sign? By their humble materiality they clearly do not participate in sculpture's monumentalizing drive. They speak more to the commodity fetish, given their exchangeable and collectable form. But they also demand the viewer's touch, which would be linked to use-value, temporality, and intimacy—all antithetical to the fetish and the preservationist impulses of the collector.⁵² The Fluxboxes maintain a persistent balance between these two extremes of sculptural possibility—the phenomenological and the semiotic—in that they arise out of a meeting of language (the event score) and objects that implicate the body (book pages, boxes, and toys).

In one of the most sophisticated readings of Fluxus objects to date, Buchloh reads Fluxboxes' mimetic engagement with commodity culture through the work of Watts, arguing that Fluxus artists, having recognized the impossibility of rejecting or critiquing market forces from an outside position, turned to a strategy of ludic affirmation in which those forces are transformed into a running gag.⁵³ Surprisingly, however, he fixates on Watts's chrome-plated works: casts of small African tribal objects and trays of eggs one would typically find in the grocery store refrigerator, all given an uncanny Brancusian sheen. In a world governed by mass-produced, highly desirable commodities, Watts's chrome-plated readymade forms can be seen to emblemize the ways in which the commodity object (of which the art object is a preeminent example) acts as a seductive mirror that attracts and reflects the beholder's desires. In this way, Buchloh connects Watts's work to a lineage of sculpture concerned more and more with an aesthetics of surface both material and semiotic that registers this condition, ultimately building toward his diagnosis of the Fluxus project as one of utter submission to the logic of the fetish and its alienating effects, albeit with a few moments of "sudden rupture" within the system's "mesmerizing totality and numbing continuity."⁵⁴

Such a focus on surfaces makes sense in relation to the singular example of Watts's chrome-plated objects. But collectively, I would argue that the Fluxboxes require a different narrative, one that can account for the various evocations of penetration, passing through, and taking in. Might a focus on surfaces cover over, both literally and figuratively, a critical art history of touch, absorption, and bodily incorporation? What happens when the art object addresses the subject not by means of an aesthetics of surface but through the figure of the *hole*? Many scholars have analyzed Fluxus's modes of haptic engagement, but here I want to suggest that the insistent figure of the hole across the collective's production calls for a deeper reading.⁵⁵ Indeed, we see across the Fluxboxes so many holes, open mouths, and anuses in addition to plugs, pills, droppers, and tubes. The box itself is already a kind of hole—an enclosed, portable void. Ay-O's *Finger Boxes* are holes with built-in holes, Mieko Shiomi's *Endless Box* a hole-*en-abyme*. Vautier's

Flux Holes could potentially incorporate anything as a representation of a hole, yet of course his holes contain, in fact, nothing.

Such holes are certainly not sculptures; perhaps they are not even objects. For Fluxus artists the hole was anti-illusionistic, anti-significatory, brutally concrete. Ay-O's holes were seen as a form of concrete painting. Roth's *Poem Machine*, which magically conjures readymade poetry from negative space, was the very definition of concrete poetry. So many Fluxboxes offer holes to look through, holes to penetrate, holes through which things may enter or fall out. As a corollary to the Fluxboxes' logic of endless connectivity and indiscriminate classification, these many Fluxus holes point to an attendant threat of entropy and loss in this expanded material and semiotic field. They call attention to the fugitive presence of the thing at hand, reminding us that the artwork, like the body, will eventually deteriorate and disappear.

If reflective surfaces within art history have been associated with projection, identification, and mimesis, the hole signifies passage and exchange. Being not decidedly of one object/body or another, the hole marks the site of transition, a pathway to difference. The Fluxbox thus stages object-relations as an archetypal experience of fetishization in which the fetish-object seems to have emerged, transitionally, from the subject's own body. As William Pietz has explained, "The fetish is . . . first of all, something intensely personal, whose truth is experienced as a substantial movement from 'inside' the self . . . into the self-limited morphology of a material object situated in space 'outside.' Works of art are true fetishes only if they are material objects at least as intensely personal as the water of tears."⁵⁶ The most thorough exploration of this idea was realized in Larry Miller's *Orifice Flux Plugs* (1974), a treasury of earphones, enema syringes, nose-droppers, cotton balls, pacifiers, whistles, glass eyes, bullets, tampons, bottle nipples, and condoms (plate 9). But of course it was Maciunas with his perverse humor who would push the limits of a Fluxus approach to the fetish by literally gathering the body's leavings—human hair, fingernails, and the shavings from calluses and bunions—as the materials for Filliou's *Fluxhair* and Ken Friedman's *Flux Clippings* (1967). So many Fluxboxes catalogue the bodily vicissitudes of ingestion, exfoliation, penetration, and being penetrated. We are meant to ingest the dirty water, put our finger in the hole, slip on the glove, soil the washcloth. Difference and separation are short-circuited through an obsessive fixation on the bodily grotesque. One need only register the way Maciunas photographed the Fluxboxes opened, undone, strewn out, and mixed up, as compared to any photograph of a Pop multiple, which reliably shows items artfully and precisely arranged so we can imagine how everything fits back together neatly in its proper place.

Relatedly, the subject-object relations posited by Fluxus objects entail a dynamic akin to child's play, for the simplicity of gestures drawn "automatically" from the handler mimics the way toys are designed to naturally rehearse and

encourage the infant's basic motor skills on his or her way to gaining increasing control over the world and its objects. For this reason the Fluxboxes may helpfully be considered in relation to D. W. Winnicott's notion of the transitional object, an item elected instinctually by the infant as a symbolic substitute for the breast as he or she begins to understand that there exist things separate from the self and begins to accept relations with those "not-me" objects.⁵⁷ In this traumatic developmental phase, the transitional object must be able to survive the infant's obsessive love, hate, and aggression as it is alternately cuddled and mutilated, adored and deplored. Bodily traces—fingerprints and body odors—reinforce the infant's possessive relationship to it. The transitional object is thus the preeminent fetish, constituting the infant's first encounter with the dynamics of fetishistic relations. There is the same pregenital fixation, the alternation between obsessive love and castrating hatred, and the irrepressible attraction to what is "dirty" and "evil-smelling."⁵⁸ In comparison to the developmental logic of the transitional object—for healthy infants, the object decathects over time, and interest is redistributed over a range of objects and people—the quality of Fluxus play seems at times regressive or rear-guard, quite anti-developmental in its concentration on the bodily, especially the anal and scatological. It is no coincidence that once Maciunas arrived at the Fluxbox format he would comment self-reflexively on the anality of its logic by producing several versions of his Wunderkammer of poop, *Excreta Fluxorum*.

Returning to Vautier and his emblematic collection of *Flux Holes*, whose title already implies a lack or void the beholder is invited to fill, one notices indeed that the remaining empty space of the box invites the addition of other holes of the beholder's choosing. Expanding on a Flux-logic of corporeal interchange, an errant taxonomic structure is here unleashed, one that encourages recognitions of affiliation between objects beyond the box's own rational bounds. In other words, Fluxboxes encourage engagement and identification with objects that are excessively not-me. They demonstrate a promiscuously boundless model of thought that encourages us to locate ever more holes in our surroundings, defying the very principle of containability that the boxes as containers would seem to propose. In this way, they manifest the event score's diagrammatic principles of connectivity and transmutability by promoting the endless exercise of matching increasingly dissimilar objects like-to-like, as if difference could eventually be made to disappear. The concept behind each Fluxbox defines in miniature a system of signification—of time, light, food, medicine, and so on—that reorients the meaning and function of each object placed within it, unhinging or disidentifying it from its given purpose and positioning it in a newly meaningful relation to other objects with which it may typically bear no affinity. Looking across numerous Fluxboxes, it seems that the more generic, ubiquitous items—nuts, bolts, washers, matchsticks, dice—have the most flexible identities, appearing most frequently across

different editions. In the varying versions of Watts's *Flux Timekit* (1966), for example, one can find dice and matchsticks alongside seeds, beans, measuring tape, watch gears, postmarked stamps, balloons, chalk, bullets, shells, and an hourglass. The odd collection raises the question: What are the most fundamental aspects of a common understanding of time and its measurement? In turn, this open-minded approach to the meaning of a given object presses the concept behind the box to its limits. In this case, one then wonders: What kind of item is *not* in some way indexed to time?

Maneuvers of comparison, exchange, and conversion are further encouraged by the Fluxboxes' horizontality, which allows beholders to shuttle items about within their compartmentalized interiors. A version of the 1960s transformation of the picture plane into a "flatbed" surface of operations and procedures, the Fluxboxes' horizontal, segmented, often transparent packaging encourages acts of transposition of individual parts, acknowledging similarity and difference simultaneously and recalling the highly physical interactivity of scores and cards seen in the earliest Fluxus publications.⁵⁹ Such exercises uniquely associated with the experience of Fluxus multiples throw the identity, meaning, and value of individual objects into question, reverting them to mere things that confront the viewer with their brute materiality, as if to cultivate an alternative competency in relation to the materials of everyday life. Objects are transformed in Fluxus from ultimate commodities—highly useful goods available in mass quantity—into anti-commodities that no longer primarily identify with their intended purpose. Through endless physical and significant reconfiguration, Fluxus objects evade both material and semiotic fixity, as if to model a premodern symbolic economy akin to the group's premodern, artisanal mode of production—a symbolic economy of extended value in which there is no general equivalent, no privileged object to dominate or organize exchange, but simply an infinite supply of endlessly interchangeable things. (Appropriately, theorist Jean-Joseph Goux has associated the polymorphism of value in premodern economies with the polymorphism of *jouissance* encountered in the anal stage, which revels in "the reversible and *contradictory* relationships of preeminence which obtain among objects.")⁶⁰

As Liz Kotz has written of the array of efforts in this period to multiply or dematerialize the art object, "These moves reflect and respond to a destabilization and dispersal of the object immanent to advanced forms of industrial production. Mass produced, repeatable, and thus eminently replaceable, the object becomes empty, a placeholder or position in a larger system of recombination and transformation."⁶¹ Indeed, it seems that the figure of the hole that appears and reappears across Fluxus objects is deliberate and emblematic, calling attention to the ways in which Fluxus artists established the conditions for the work of art to change its form continuously, opting for the object's dispersal on both material and conceptual registers over its formal consolidation. This is the kind of Flux Maciunas

imagined when he originally chose the title for his neo-dada magazine. This is the kind of Flux that corresponded to the collective's calls for rear-guardism and intermediality at a time when the institutionalization of the avant-garde meant that Rauschenberg would appear next to Duchamp on a panel in the halls of MoMA. Almost anything can enter Vautier's *Flux Holes* to become a valid extension of the box's rather straightforward, propositional title. Whatever enters is provisionally valued according to the loosely structuring physical and conceptual frame of the box, and this reference to the exchangeability of commodities is equated with what goes into and out of the body. But of course, commodities are not supposed to be exchanged quite like this. The physical traces that accumulate on Fluxus objects—fingerprints, creases, stains, tears—amount to a historical catalogue of all the bodies that have handled them. As art objects, their preservation is always frustrated by the body's trace. Fluxus objects are destroyed a little, then returned to their boxes and put away, held in reserve until reengaged. They pose an alternative to the commodity that magnetizes use-value and exchange-value and that models—through a deprivileging of materiality that is paradoxically highly material—associative, connective, diagrammatic modes of thought.

THE TRANSITIONAL COMMODITY

Fluxus objects collapse the categories of commodity and capital in their aggressive literalization of the Marxian notion that a thing may only realize its value when it is kept in circulation. However, unlike capitalist exchange, this is one in which value does not accumulate. It is an anti-accumulatory exchange that deliberately perpetuates loss. The rear-guard strategy of the Fluxbox was to be bad art (trashy or tasteless), bad sculpture (fingered up), and a bad commodity (useless and always already obsolete). In this last tactic of Fluxus's multifront arsenal, the Fluxbox instigates an experiential dynamic of disappointment and frustration. The absurd relationship between label and contents is what produces their gag effect, but the humor is often (dissatisfyingly) corny, pathetic, or base. This experience of cultivated disappointment coincides with the initial critical reaction to Fluxus performances, which, in contrast to the "wild and joyous and semi-accidental" Happenings taking place in the same moment, were seen as "studied, painstaking, almost frozen—at unendurable length"—all boredom-inducing qualities whose aesthetic value Fluxus artists defended.⁶² To open a Fluxbox is to rehearse the anticipation of purchasing a new, highly desired consumer product and opening it for the first time, but here the thrill of novelty and surprise is depleted almost instantaneously. Instead of bringing satisfaction, the object fuels desire for more, different, newer things. This play of calculated disillusionment, which affiliates Fluxus with other deliberately counterspectacular practices of the 1960s, was

self-reflexively thematized in the origami boxes-within-boxes of Shiomi's *Endless Box* and the abundance of boxes and envelopes contained in the anthologies *Fluxus 1*, *Fluxkit*, and *Flux Year Box 2*. The frame of the box guides the viewer through a staged experience of the delirium of fantasmatic consumption only to frustrate that experience with deliberately disappointed expectations, just as the transitional object decathects for the infant. If the transitional object represents the intermediary period of the child's separation from the mother and the child's beginning to comprehend what-is-not-me, then it is responsible for guiding the child into the world of objects, other potential fetishes, and thus into the world of commodities. This is the reason Fluxboxes mirror the form of the store-bought toy. Fetishistic relations are exploited to produce an experience of defetishization. Flipping between delight and disenchantment, the Fluxboxes' rehearsal of failed object-relations deflates our fantasies about what commodities—artworks in particular—might provide.

In the Fluxboxes' challenge for us to use them, to submit to their transgressive and associative logic, they challenge not only the aesthetic history of the sculptural object but also our relationship to objects *tout court* as established from the very beginning of our lives. The boxes and the objects they contain give themselves over to the body—disappearing into it, being destroyed by it—at the same time that the body is forced to reckon with its all-consuming, possessive relationship to objects. In one of the most direct postwar reconfigurations of the interrelated haptic and psychic dimensions of Dada and Surrealist objects, Fluxus objects are engulfed by the body as subjectivity is mapped onto the object and formed by it in turn. Here is Herbert Marcuse describing, in the late 1960s, the broad cultural forces to which the Fluxboxes were addressed:

The so-called consumer economy and the politics of corporate capitalism have created a second nature of man which ties him libidinally and aggressively to the commodity form. The need for possessing, consuming, handling, and constantly renewing gadgets, devices, instruments, engines, offered to and imposed upon people, for using these wares even at the danger of one's own destruction, has become a biological need.⁶³

In Fluxus's radically haptic aesthetic developed in response to these conditions, the now-biological need for the commodity was thematized as a dialectic of intimate touching and perpetual exchange that attempted, quite impossibly, a reconciliation of the fetish concepts of Freud and Marx. A mode of interaction akin to child's play was encouraged as a means less of imagining a regression to or fetishization of childhood than of loosening the stranglehold of the symbolic in order to access a prelinguistic, presymbolic, "pre-personal," "pre-ego-logical," or (at the very least) non-habituated engagement with the objects of our world.⁶⁴

(Indeed, it is a truism among Fluxus scholars and curators that the work appeals best to children and experts, and few in between.) The Fluxboxes' "transitional . . . & temporary" "pedagogical function[s]" (as Maciunas described in his 1964 letter to Schmit) aimed to release commodities from their workaday functions, giving them new purpose and new life.⁶⁵ To borrow language from the Retort collective, addressed to a twenty-first-century audience but remarkably resonant with what I am arguing about Fluxus objects, the political potential of such a project is this:

Commodities can embody human purposes, and are capable of inflecting and developing such purposes, only if they are constantly subject to reorientation—change of function, change of valuation, *recall to their mere instrumentality*—in a world of meanings vastly exceeding those that any *things* can conjure up.⁶⁶

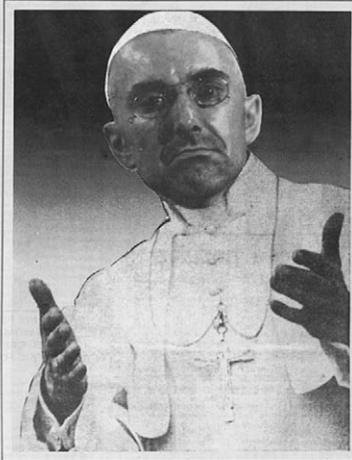
Indeed, if the cynical mirroring of commodity culture in Fluxus has been characterized by some as an ultimately fatalistic enterprise, it should still be recognized how these objects constructively propose and model the revolutionary potential to be found in the transvaluation of objects. If the transitional object marks the irreversible threshold from which we leave the safety of the self to confront the world of objects, the Fluxboxes' address to the world of objects-as-commodities produces a critical object for both the social and aesthetic fields that we may call the transitional commodity, one that offers pathways to as-yet-undiscovered object-relations not programmed by commodity culture or modernist aesthetics, object-relations that deprioritize and defetishize the object itself in favor of experiences of trans-subjective identification. Fluxus's transitional commodities engender an interrelation between subjects and objects held constantly in flux, exposing the beholder to both danger and newfound freedom in the knowledge that we are beholden to, enchanted by, and formed by our objects just as much as they can provide us with a logic that exceeds their ritualized functions. In this, the Fluxboxes form part of a much longer lineage of avant-garde objects, from the Socialist objects of Russian Constructivism, Dada readymades, and Surrealist objects of symbolic function to more recently identified "disobedient objects" of mass protest, all in their own ways meant to intervene into and reconfigure inter-subjective relations through carefully considered yet often quite modest material means.⁶⁷

SUBJECTIVITY IN FLUX

We cannot yet end with the Fluxbox and its utopian function as a transitional object that models a path toward the devaluation and obsolescence of art, for in Fluxus's efforts to promote collectivism, anonymity, and anti-individualism, the

Hart attack kills him at summer palace

MACI UNAS DIES



George Maciunas in one of his many disguises to elude the Attorney General.

Flux Pope George Maciunas died last year after collapsing with a heart attack at his summer palace in New Marlborough. Earlier doctors fought to save the 92 years old spinster after being beaten and gang raped. He was given the last rites and the Flux Council appealed for world-wide prayers for his life.

'With deep anguish' Sobbing aide breaks news to the world

"She suffered horribly," said a Scotland Yard man. "The people who did this were animals."
A sobbing spokesman announced the news "with profound anguish and emotion." Crews wept in the main square outside the palace.

Bruises

Three youths were involved—Afterwards one of them went to sleep on the battered spinster's bed. The parish church bell tolled a death knell. The papal Flux guards, dressed in their evening uniform of dark blue, closed the heavy gates of the palace.
The Pope was administered a Holy Flux Oil, a rite known as "extreme unction."
The old lady was raped three times. Her jaw and six ribs were

broken. Her body was a mass of bruises—battered with her own aluminum tea kettle. At the time the frail leader of 700 million planksters was listening to jokes recited at his bedside by his private secretary.

Tragedy

"This was the most horrific attack on a woman I have ever experienced and one I hope I'll never experience again," added Detective Inspector Robert Hayday, who is leading the investigation.
The Pope's two personal physicians, the Fluxus Secretary of State, George Brecht, and several others were at the Pope's bedside when he died. Yesterday the spinster underwent two emergency operations in Hart's Hospital, London. Only six days ago the Pope visited a cardinal's tomb and told a congregation, "I hope to meet him after death, which cannot be far away."
The attack was on Saturday night. A police spokesman said "He made full use of his 92 age papacy and in his 15 years of office has travelled further and wider than

any of his predecessors." "An apostle on the move," he was the first reigning pontiff to travel by air, the first to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and the first to receive Communist leaders. He survived a knife attack in the Philippines in 1976. Two youths shinned up a drainage pipe into the neighboring flat of a 14 year old man who was out playing bingo. They ransacked the man's flat. They disturbed the old lady when she came up to investigate. They beat her up and then they all raped her.

Blood

One of the most difficult moments was in 1971 when he issued his encyclical letter on sex called "Avant Garder" Festivals, which shocked the hierarchy and caused confusion. When the neighbor came home, he found this youth asleep on the bed and the woman in a pool of blood on the floor.
Fluxus officials were said to be inspecting the grotto of St. Peter's basilica, where Popes are buried, and the sewers of Rome. It was during this that he was stricken by

the fatal attack. Last night a youth was helping police inquiries.

Smothered along the waterfront of Fluxus Area are often surprised to see the crews of Japanese merchant ships playing "snackball" on cash, which the soccer-loving Argentine fans/shorter men consider "quaint Oriental games."

The Eskimos have been forbidden by Danish authorities to hunt within several square miles of the crash site. The Eskimos have also been told not to boil their meat with melted sea ice, as they have done for centuries in order to obtain salt, but to buy salt at the Danish Government trading post and to use melted glacier ice and to use melted sea ice.

450 SPERRY WORKERS FACE THE AX
A funeral atmosphere gripped the Sperry Gyroscope plant at Lake Success, L.I., today as its 6,350 employees reported for work.

Fig 46. Fluxus Editorial Council, a V T R E EXTRA, 1979. Offset lithograph on paper. Open: 15 x 22 7/8 in.

identity of the artist was under assault too. As Allan Kaprow observed, "Fluxus has always been for me a clarifier, or should I say, a *flusher*?, of inessentials—inessentials like individualism, important subject matter, lofty formalisms, career, market."⁶⁸ Countering expectations that artworks be unique, precious, and the creation of a singular author, the Fluxboxes dramatized the decentering and dispersal of both object and subject, prefiguring—negatively, perhaps—contemporary art's postmedium condition, in which concepts are made to circulate through endless chains of media and formats at the same time that artists are accustomed to working collaboratively and taking on multiple roles in relation to their work, from design to production, promotion, and even sales. In short, the destabilization of subjectivity, particularly of the artist-subject, was yet another valence of the word *flux*.

As we have seen, Fluxus objects, made as they were from scraps, clippings, junk, rags, smears, and garbage, amounted to a grimly ironic celebration of all manner of loss captured in physical form. For the Fluxus artist understood that

in order to dissolve art into life—to make one’s artistic practice into a kind of life praxis—one would have to embrace trauma, loss, and death along with the joy, humor, and sociality of life. Maciunas would have his share of them all. Having spent his New York years living in a series of grimy, low-rent, mice-infested apartments with his mother, by the end of his life it seemed he felt allied to the mouse, scurrying about, collecting the chaff of commerce and playing a cat-and-mouse game of evasion—from authorities who wished to shutter his Soho loft cooperatives, from a contractor’s henchmen who in 1975 beat him nearly to death, and from the pancreatic cancer by which he was slowly and painfully dying. Relinquishing any separation between art and life, Maciunas concomitantly embraced all forms of life, including its antithesis—death.

The culmination of Maciunas’s Fluxus labors, his final work of art/life, could conceivably be located in the “Flux funeral” held at 80 Wooster Street four days after his death in May 1978. If this idea seems preposterous or perverse, we need only consider the broadsheet newspaper produced by his Fluxus friends to announce his passing, which bore the headline for a wildly exaggerated story—“MACIUNAS DIES: Hart [*sic*] attack kills him at summer palace”—alongside a photomontage of the artist in papal regalia (fig. 46). At a second memorial service for family and friends, his mother, who never quite understood the passion with which George undertook his Fluxus activities, was finally able to imagine the preservation of her son’s body as a most profound kind of Fluxbox (as he himself likely would have), assembled with the utmost affection, love, and care. Describing the event, she wrote, “When looking at his last ‘box (drawer/chest)’ in which his emaciated body lay, and at the lid where a huge bouquet of Nature’s gifts—springtime flowers—shone perfectly, his ‘children’ gathered again, his friends, and his spirit saw them and rejoiced.”⁶⁹ In light of this, the Fluxboxes might now appear to us as grids of grave plots for objects made obsolete by commodities bright and shiny and new, a succession of poignant little coffins for what commercial culture left for dead but which Fluxus artists, like postmodern rag-pickers, sought to give new life.

Fundamentally allographic, the Fluxboxes participate in a set of scored relations between objects, between different versions of the “same” object, between artists, and between artists and their audiences. They exist only in relation to other possible versions they might take and other authors or participants who might realize or interact with them. As Julia Robinson has written, “Rejecting works of ‘art’ as finalized, static objects, the primary function of the Fluxus score”—which I have argued provided the allographic blueprint for Fluxus objects—“was to compose relationships between subjects.”⁷⁰ But the kinds of relationships composed by both Fluxus scores and objects implied more than simply a collaborative production model and the dedication of works to one’s artist-friends. The Fluxus artwork’s embrace of change and loss was seen positively by Fluxus artists as pro-

moting a dramatic form of subjective expansion, or what we might call “subjectivity in flux.” If the Fluxus work evades fixed material status in its constitution as a continuously evolving tissue of tenuously and analogically related provisional gestures and objects, it also provides a powerful model of the Fluxus subject: intersubjective and ephemeral/mortal, gaining meaning, value, and longevity through perpetual circulation through systems of reciprocal exchange. This Fluxus model of subjectivity was yet another dimension of what Hannah Higgins has identified as the collective’s “appreciative (as opposed to cynical) and empathetic (as opposed to alienated) cognitive model.”⁷¹ In 1963, Brecht wrote to Maciunas that he viewed “the ‘person’ [as] such an approximate, one might say ‘inaccurate,’ and overworked construction” given that, as he explained to Vautier two years later, “it’s always impossible to decide where the work of an artist or a creator finishes and where the work of somebody else begins.”⁷² Fluxus authorship, in other words, was trans-subjective as well as schismatic in regard to the practice of individual artists. “For each artist,” explained Dick Higgins, “the Fluxus work which he did was a part of a *different body* which had its own integrity: there was not even one artist who did only Fluxus work among the original Fluxus people.”⁷³

To figure the “different body” of the Fluxus subject, the figure of the hole returns. Alongside the many Fluxus holes we have considered thus far, Maciunas produced between 1961 and 1967 an astonishing series of photographic portraits of his artist-compatriots that stage encounters of the artist’s body with the liminal space of the hole (figs. 47, 48, 49). Yoko Ono’s determined visage appears through a tear in an enormous concert poster, while Ay-O peeks mischievously

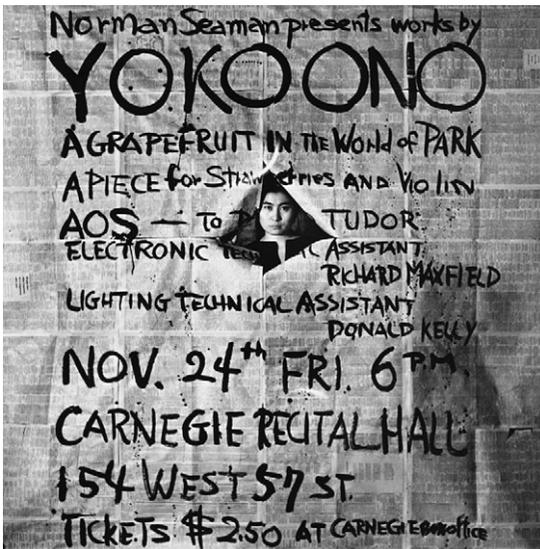


Fig 47. George Maciunas, photograph conceived as poster for *Works by Yoko Ono*, Carnegie Recital Hall, New York, 1961. Gelatin silver print. Image 7 1/2 x 7 9/16 in. (19.1 x 19.2 cm), sheet 9 15/16 x 7 15/16 in. (25.3 x 20.2 cm). Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2598.2008. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. By permission of Billie J. Maciunas, PhD.



Fig 48. George Maciunas, *Portrait of Ay-O*, 1964. Gelatin silver print. Image 18 9/16 x 18 7/8 in. (47.1 x 47.9 cm); sheet 23 7/8 x 19 7/8 in. (60.7 x 50.5 cm). Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2413.2008. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. By permission of Billie J. Maciunas, PhD.

through a portal that mimes those of his *Tactile Boxes*. In both images it remains unclear what constitutes inside and outside; what is important is rather the status of the hole as passageway, an architecture of transition. In a portrait of Milan Knížák, multiple holes call for our attention: a gaping eye and mouth as well as two flared nostrils and a second, half-opened eye. These projective and incorporative sphincters welcome proliferating connotations of the body's desires, states, and drives: hunger, sexual pleasure, illness, violence, and so on. Next to these we should consider a Polaroid of Maciunas taken by Watts in 1977, the year before Maciunas's early death (plate 10). Above the toothy smile he bares for the camera, two mischievous, twinkling blue eyes stare out. Yet one of them is a Canal Street cast-off, a doll's eyeball with an oversize iris and false lashes that



Fig 49. George Maciunas, *Portrait of Milan Knížák*, 1967. Gelatin silver print. Image 19 x 18 7/8 in. (48.2 x 47.9 cm), sheet 23 7/8 x 19 7/8 in. (60.7 x 50.5 cm). Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2486.2008. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. By permission of Billie J. Maciunas, PhD.

stands in for the eye he had lost in the vicious beating two years before. Another prosthetic—a plaster finger—plugs his left ear. (Appropriately, both objects are borrowed from Miller’s *Orifice Flux Plugs*.) The body full of holes is revealed here as the grotesque body, a body that literally opens itself up and gives itself over to other objects and other subjects. Indeed, it is through holes such as these—optical, nasal, aural, oral, anal, urethral, glandular, vaginal, umbilical, cervical—that we physically join with one another and with the world. It is through holes such as these that we are born.

Corresponding to the Fluxus object, I argue, is a model of trans-subjective, self-othering subjectivity that identifies with others, that identifies with what is different despite that difference, that sees likeness where we are otherwise conditioned to see difference.⁷⁴ In contrast to the Freudian understanding of love as essentially heteropathic or excorporative and thus impoverishing to the ego, the Fluxus model of subjectivity posits that the self-dissolution and self-abnegation required by collective production leads to an expanded notion of self. Indeed, Fluxus has not vanished with the passing of so many of its founding figures, and it continues to be historicized not as a movement but rather as a “spirit” or “attitude” that is seen by younger generations of artists and critics as living on.⁷⁵ Even Dick Higgins, in the aftermath of his (temporary) expulsion from Fluxus by Maciunas for founding his own publishing outlet, the Something Else Press, wrote:

And so again I am a Fluxus person. . . . [I believe in] an art which by its very nature denies its perpetrators their daily bread, which must therefore come from somewhere else. Such an art must be given, in the sense that experience is shared: it cannot be placed in the market place. And in this way it differs profoundly from the Fluxus-derived “movements” of earth-works or media-hype forms of concept art. Much of that work I enjoy—I even love: especially Acconci, Smithson, Beuys. But finally I must reject it, not because it isn’t officially Fluxus, but because it isn’t free. It’s just so many hat racks for careers to be hung onto. When the name of the artist determines the market value of a work and not its meaning in our lives—beware! And there again we come to Fluxus. In the early sixties, when the first generation of Fluxus artists were doing and giving away their experiences, it mattered little which of us had done which piece. The spirit was: you’ve seen it, now—very well, it’s yours. Now you are free to make your own variation on it if you like, and the piece and the world will be a little richer for all that.⁷⁶

Higgins’s words suggest that in a final sense, the figure of the hole that appears across Fluxus production can be seen as an invitation, a proposition, a gift—an idea that had already been materialized in a 1964 work by Takako Saito, yet another box. Inside is a wooden frame covered on both sides with delicate paper,

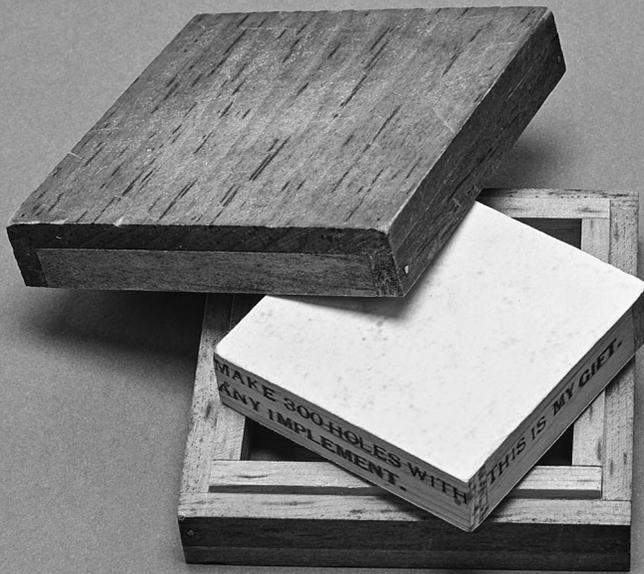


Fig 50. Takako Saito, *Make 300 holes with any implement: This is my gift*, 1964. Wood and paper, 8.5 x 8.5 x 3 cm. Jean Brown papers, 1916–1995 (bulk 1958–1985), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (890164 and 2016.M.14). © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

its edges stamped with the words “Make 300 holes with any implement. This is my gift” (fig. 50).

While Fluxus’s earliest material production seemed to ally closely with the new category of the 1960s object, in its very objectification of certain qualities of Fluxus performance practice it also pressed the object’s limits, embracing a radical provisionality in materials and design as well as inviting physical interactivity, being intimately affiliated with and even at times attached to the body. Fluxus’s score-based objects modeled an anti-fetishistic relationship to the art object through processes of iteration, collaboration, and exchange while also insisting on the artwork’s material presence, often registered as a quasi-bodily presence. Fluxus object production thus anticipated strategies that would come to wider acceptance through late 1960s conceptual art, while crucially acknowledging from the outset the impossibility of a fully dematerialized practice. The dialectic of ephemerality and materiality that characterizes Fluxus’s nonsensically utilitarian, formally transmutable objects—what I have been calling transitional

commodities—critically responded to the conditions of modernist sculpture and postwar commodity culture while offering a unique model of subject-object relations and community-formation at the earliest identifiable moment of post-modernism. For the present, the Fluxus object offers a historical model that may help us think through contemporary concerns about the political and symbolic functions of art objects, the relationship between performances and their objects, the participatory turn in art, and new modes of subjectivity, authorship, and artistic labor modeled therein.



Objects Without Object

ROBERT FILLIOU AND THE UNWORKING OF FLUXUS

As a group, what binds us is greater than what divides us. Individually, what divides us is greater than what binds us.

—ROBERT FILLIOU

FLUXUS ABANDONMENTS

The proliferation of Fluxus's artworks in flux overseen by chairman George Maciunas was part of an effort to realize what had been set forth in his 1963 manifesto—boundless purging, flowing, flooding, and change for the sake of a “non art reality” understandable and available to all (see fig. 9). In the previous chapter, I detailed how the production of Fluxus objects realized their (non)identity as objects both purposeless *and* without a fixed object-status—in essence, “objects without

object,” to borrow the evocative title of a 1969 work by Robert Filliou. In contrast to Fluxus’s multifarious objects, however, Maciunas maintained that as members of a collective, Fluxus artists should be *fused* into an anonymous, united front that would complement the transitional pedagogical function of its works. In parallel with the ontological construction of the object without object, in regard to the authorship of Fluxus editions—often compilations of works by various artists whose individual identities were difficult to disentangle—Maciunas proposed the almost impossible construction of the artwork without artist. Maciunas invented alphabetical codes to stand in for artists’ proper names, and some works were attributed simply to the Fluxus name, as if it were a brand. The works’ participatory nature and multistep, collaborative production process called authorship yet further into question.

But problems arose when Maciunas tried to formalize collective anonymity by incorporating Fluxus in a quasi-legal sense. In a January 1963 newsletter, he announced a new policy that would require affiliated artists to grant Fluxus exclusive publication rights for all past and future works. Furthermore, Maciunas intended to pursue international copyrights “to protect authors from unauthorized copy and performance. . . . Such monopolistic scheme,” he explained, “is proposed for the purpose of obtaining wider copyright coverage, greater protection of authors and greater centralization of new art and anti-art activities.”¹ This communiqué drew numerous negative responses, including from George Brecht and Nam June Paik, who argued that requiring permission to perform Fluxus works was inappropriate to their ethos and that such centralization and control would destroy the “harmonious cooperation” necessary for producing successful Fluxus events.² As Brecht later explained, “Copyright entails the idea of possession. And I don’t at all have the feeling of possessing what I do. For example, when I say or write ‘listen to the telephone,’ anyone could do that.”³ Inherent to the event score format was the disavowal of the artwork’s uniqueness and originality and the liberal adoption of everyday objects and gestures; to copyright such works would be antithetical to their nature. From another perspective, Maciunas’s insistence on anonymous, collective production was seen as cowardly, insincere, and rather too conveniently aligned with his desire to control final design and production decisions. Takako Saito has been one to argue that artists are ethically obligated to claim individual authorship of their work as a way of taking responsibility for what they have put into the world.⁴

While Maciunas’s efforts to incorporate the wide-ranging output of dozens of artists under the banner of Fluxus were fanatically earnest and utopian, his day-to-day dealings as (in the words of Benjamin Patterson) “plagiarist and ‘arranger’ of the ideas of others” in the name of Fluxus cohesion were perceived by some as disingenuous, even totalitarian.⁵ Maciunas’s manner of working led to accusations of his stealing others’ ideas and wishing to control Fluxus artists in the manner

of a corrupt gallerist. Maciunas's "dream of Fluxus," it must be admitted, was in some ways outright dysfunctional.⁶ To give a signal example that has been raised in feminist critiques of internal Fluxus politics: following the arrival in New York of Saito, Mieko Shiomi, and Shigeo Kubota from Japan, three women artists who had traveled a great distance to commit themselves to Fluxus activities, Maciunas instituted what he referred to as a "Fluxus dinner commune." According to Saito, what was advertised by Maciunas as a self-sustaining, egalitarian operation seemed always to end with the women doing all the cooking and cleaning after having already put in a full day's work elsewhere.⁷

A most damning critique of Maciunas's actions came in the form of a letter from Dick Higgins, three years after his establishment of the Something Else Press had provoked Maciunas, who saw Higgins's gesture as traitorous and competitive, to expel him dramatically from the group:

While you invented the term "Fluxus" (and nobody will deny you that) you have consistently destroyed its utility, antagonized your real friends, and misused the whole situation for your personal cultism and aggrandizement, if not as an artist, then as a critic . . . But Fluxus means too much (and I insist on that) to allow any individual person to reduce it to a means of confinement of people's work on the basis of your own personal taste, what Breton has done with Surrealism for example. I made a grievous error in 1963 not to perform the Stockholm Fluxus without you, and in so doing, for the first time, established a precedent on the basis of which you have been able systematically to reduce the most important artistic tendency of the last half century (with Dada, of the last century) to a personal fief.⁸

The mounting controversies that initiated the downfall of Fluxus's rather brief moment of cohesion led, paradoxically, to a third wave of activities lasting from 1966 until Maciunas's death in 1978. During this period, Maciunas devoted himself to the planning and implementation of collective projects that reimagined all facets of life under the umbrella of Fluxus. There were to be Fluxhouse loft cooperatives in Soho, Fluxparades, Fluxorchestra concerts, Flux street events, Fluxolympiads, Fluxtours, Fluxfeasts, a Flux-Mass, a Fluxcolony in the British Virgin Islands, and a Fluxus-derived art school in western Massachusetts imagined in the tradition of the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College. The endeavors of this late phase—some executed, some merely planned—moved beyond the earlier, mostly symbolic efforts to transgress the art-life divide and sought to craft a holistic Fluxus way of life. However, as Andreas Huyssen has rightly observed, "the almost obsessive and fetishistic Fluxus emphasis on redoing everything under the sun in its own name seems . . . like an anticipation of the apolitical lifestyle obsessions of later decades (the difference being that life according to Fluxus

was not supposed to be commercialized at all).”⁹ And yet, while it may seem that Maciunas’s grandiose proposals accommodated the Fluxus project to the culture of spectacle, the reality was a series of intimate experiments undertaken by interconnected circles of Fluxfriends.

Next to reimagining existing social practices through the lens of Fluxus, Maciunas sought to establish an international network of Fluxshops in order to distribute the numerous editions, publications, and ephemera that crowded his studio. In the summer of 1964, he wrote to Emmett Williams, “I am so piled up with newspapers, cards, boxes of all kinds, I can hardly turn around or scratch myself. That’s why I thought it wise to follow Crushchev’s [Nikita Khrushchev] advice and Decentralize Fluxus—at least to 3 centers Tokyo-New York-Amsterdam.”¹⁰ Maciunas’s newsletters and serial publishing plans had already reprised some of the bureaucratic strategies to which Dadaist Tristan Tzara had turned in the 1920s (the circulation of an officious letterhead, for example) in order to forge a “proto-globalized identity” for Dada.¹¹ Maciunas’s expanding list of Fluxcenters included Willem De Ridder’s European Mail-Order Warehouse in Amsterdam (see fig. 42), Ben Vautier’s *Magazin* record shop in Nice, and Brecht and Filliou’s *La Cédille qui Sourit* in Villefrance-sur-Mer. It is unclear whether the Tokyo outlet, likely affiliated with the Hi Red Center, ever materialized. In this latter phase, the Fluxus project was no longer concerned with the Marxist question of production; rather, in the words of Paik, the revolutionary artist-collective of the 1960s would have to “seize the distribution-medium” in order to reach new audiences.¹²

Thus the project of Fluxus could only continue through its dissolution and dispersal, even if such an expansion meant that Maciunas would lose control over its identity. After all, most artists’ allegiance to Fluxus had only ever been partial from the start. To see the project of Fluxus as circumscribed by Maciunas’s activities is limiting, and an inaccurate representation of what most affiliates of the group imagined it to be. In these later years, as Owen Smith describes, “Fluxus became more of an organization through which a changing cast of participants took part in various activities.”¹³ As we have seen in regard to the Fluxus object—a work that literally and figuratively gave itself away—the nature of Fluxus practice ultimately did not allow for a tight-knit group model. The collective’s activities tended toward the disavowal of the coherence of Fluxus itself, a construction that most artists adopted as a convenient but easily abandoned outlet (that “different body” described by Dick Higgins) for projects that did not comport with the rest of their creative practice.¹⁴

And so there were other kinds of artworks in flux, or objects without object, that emerged outside of Maciunas’s assembly-line production. Among the most important of these came from the French artist Robert Filliou. While Brecht and Maciunas have figured centrally in existing studies of Fluxus, the unique contributions of Filliou have been mostly overlooked. Filliou’s aesthetic theories were

elaborated through poetic writings and artworks that point to what would sustain Fluxus after its dynamic New York years and after the decline of Maciunas's central role in its organization. Filliou never lived in New York, although he visited several times, and he did not participate in the first Fluxus concert in Wiesbaden. But he did participate in lesser-known early events that were important to what Fluxus would become, including the "Fluxus Preview" mounted with Patterson in Paris in July 1962 and the Festival of Misfits in London in October the same year. As I argue in this chapter, however, Filliou's ambivalent relationship to Fluxus makes him an appropriately emblematic figure through whom we can address the group's dwindling cohesion and afterlife in the late 1960s and beyond.

Filliou's remarkable biography gave him a worldly, spirited, and critical outlook on the possibilities for collective artistic action after almost two decades of radical struggle and disappointment culminating in May 1968.¹⁵ As a teenager, Filliou joined and fought with the Communist resistance (namely the F.T.P., or *Francs-Tireurs et Partisans Français*) in the Gard region of France, near his hometown of Sauve. Beginning in this period and after, he continued to identify as a socialist-anarchist invested in the writings of Charles Fourier and Buddhist philosophy. In 1946, Filliou traveled to Los Angeles in search of his father, a tailor whom he had never met, and worked at a Coca-Cola factory before completing a master's degree in economics at the University of California, Los Angeles. Filliou then worked for the US Foreign Service in Okinawa and Guam and for the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency in South Korea. Cynical of the West's ambitions to legislate political order and well-being, and certain that his radical politics would eventually get him fired, Filliou abandoned that career path and then traveled through Egypt and Spain, where he met the Danish painter Dan Fischer, who encouraged Filliou to travel with him to Denmark. There, he met and fell in love with Fischer's goddaughter, Marianne Staffeldt. The two moved to Paris, embracing a life of near poverty as Filliou devoted himself to writing experimental plays and poetry. By 1960, he was ushered into a visual arts practice and proto-Fluxus milieu by a new friend, Daniel Spoerri.

There could not have been a figure more opposite to Maciunas's American pseudo-entrepreneurial industriousness and fastidiousness than Filliou. Maciunas was an ambitious, diligent, indefatigable bureaucrat with a penchant for toilet humor. Filliou the Frenchman was seen in French artistic circles, even by those whom he considered his friends, as a lazy poet, a misfit, a wastrel, a mooch, a bum, a *clochard*. His output did not follow the byways laid by Maciunas (who accordingly published relatively few works by Filliou), but it was nevertheless an exemplary efflorescence of the challenge to art first proposed by Maciunas's vision of Fluxus and a crucial component in the collective's project to refashion the art object and its means of distribution. Together, the two artists' antipodal yet complementary strategies characterize the multivalent efforts of the Fluxus collective

to redefine, amid a period of great artistic and historical upheaval, two dimensions crucial to our understanding of the figure of the artist: authorship and labor.

By the late 1960s it had become evident that the gesture of multiplying the artwork to undermine its value had been recuperated by the market, so Fluxus would need to look beyond the art object to its modes of distribution. Maciunas's Fluxbox production engaged the art market on its margins, whereas Filliou's undertakings (alone and in collaboration with Brecht) amounted to a radical gesture of dropping out, a seemingly un-Fluxus-like moment of *non*participation that led to alternative forms of connectivity that could not register in advanced artistic circles such as those of New York. This chapter will look at a number of these productive abandonments, measuring them against the cultural theories of Hannah Arendt, Maurice Blanchot, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Filliou himself as an economist turned poet and visual artist. If Maciunas's Fluxboxes can be seen to model the Fluxus subject, Filliou's objects without object modeled the precariously disjointed yet robust network of Fluxus artists and practices, a capacious community without community that has continued to reproduce itself into the present. And if the Fluxus drive toward the defetishization of the art object was emblemized through the figure of the hole, by the late 1960s the figure of the cedula—a connecting hook—would emerge in the work of Filliou to stand for the conceptual terms of a far-flung, international artists' community called the Eternal Network.

ROBERT FILLIOU, SEIGNEUR DES TOITS

The departure of Fluxus artists from art world centers literalized the metaphor of the underground or outsider artist, taking seriously Marcel Duchamp's 1961 pronouncement that "The great artist of tomorrow will go underground."¹⁶ There had been Maciunas's basement apartment shared with his mother in the AG Gallery days and the first exhibition of Fluxus objects in the Galerie Parnass's belowground kitchen. De Ridder's Amsterdam Fluxshop was initially located in the cellar of a bookstore specializing in war memorabilia; when he lost that space, it became a purely mail-order operation—a shop with no inside at all.¹⁷ More significant was Fluxus artists' occupation of renovated lofts in Soho led by Maciunas's founding of the redevelopment agency Fluxhouse Cooperatives Inc. in 1966. Artists made constant efforts to deceive building and city authorities about their working and living status as they skirted the law. In the reminiscences of Alison Knowles, "it was an underworld and I think maybe that contributed to the effervescence of the ideas that we weren't really above board . . . we had nobody really looking at our work except for, really, one another."¹⁸

The Fluxus culture and geography of the underground was matched by an allegiance to the outside. Like poor buskers, Knowles and Vautier gave free per-



Fig 51. Ben Vautier performing George Brecht's *Solo for Violin* (1962) during *Fully Guaranteed 12 Fluxus Concerts*, Canal Street, New York, May 23, 1964. Gelatin silver print. Image: 6 15/16 x 7 3/16 in. (17.6 x 18.2 cm); sheet: 9 15/16 x 8 1/16 in. (25.3 x 20.4 cm). Photograph by George Maciunas. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2379.2008. By permission of Billie J. Maciunas, PhD.

formances on the streets of Soho (fig. 51). In one photograph, which shows the aftermath of a realization of either Knowles's *String Piece* (1964) or Takehisa Kosugi's *Anima 1* (1961, "event for long string") (the confusion between the two works recalling the interbraided authorship and ontology of many others), Vautier's body is wound round with string, fixed in a web that harnesses his body to an adjacent building. In another performance, of Robert Watts's *Two Inches* (1962), the artists unfurled a ribbon of paper or fabric across the street, temporarily blocking a line of cars. They chose pieces that incorporated urban architecture, traffic, and street life as unwitting collaborators, drawing connections quite literally between art and city life. Even the inside of the Fluxhall was cast as a location ostensibly outside, with whitewashed text advertising Fluxus street events splashed across one wall against which Maciunas photographed a ragtag group of comrades in warm overcoats and hats, most likely because the under-heated loft was indeed very cold (figs. 52, 53). This image reappeared in vestigial form as the label for Brecht's Fluxbox *Closed on Mondays* (1969) in which a group of street urchins loiter and play in front of a set of closed doors graffitied with the names of the box's title and author (fig. 54).¹⁹ (The Flux game ends when the beholder realizes that she too is an outsider, for the box is glued shut.) Tomas Schmit imagined



Fig 52. George Maciunas, photo poster for *Fully Guaranteed 12 Fluxus Concerts: Street Events*, Fluxhall, 359 Canal Street, New York, March–May 1964. With Dick Higgins, Lette Eisenhauer, Daniel Spoerri, Alison Knowles, and Ay-O, seated. Gelatin silver print. Frame: 18 5/8 x 14 5/8 in. (47.3 x 37.2 cm). Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2181.2008.x1-x14. By permission of Billie J. Maciunas, PhD.



Fig 53. Peter Moore, performance view of Ben Vautier and Alison Knowles performing Takehisa Kosugi's *Anima I* (1961). Part of *Fully Guaranteed 12 Fluxus Concerts*, Fluxhall, 359 Canal Street, New York, March–May 1964. © 2020 Barbara Moore / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY, courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.



Fig 54. George Brecht, *Closed on Mondays*, 1969. Plastic box with offset label closed with unidentified material. Overall (closed): 3 15/16 x 4 3/4 x 5/8 in. (10 x 12 x 1.6 cm). Producer: George Maciunas. Publisher: Fluxus. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2107.2008. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. Art © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Fluxus occupations of the outside as yet another form of the group’s affinity with in-between spaces, holes, and gaps, writing that Fluxus “didn’t fill a gap in the art scene . . . it created its own gap outside the scene. It gapped around it.”²⁰ Fluxus’s affiliations with the underground and the outside only grew in contrast to contemporaneous tendencies such as Andy Warhol’s midtown Factory, established in 1964, which operated as an “outside” that in fact cultivated among its community members a highly seductive insider status.

The underground, the outside, the periphery, the street: these were appropriate sites for the Fluxus artist self-fashioned as a non-professional, outsider, misfit, or amateur—as indeed so many of them were, having trained in one discipline before dabbling in another. Filliou, recognizing himself as an outsider, made his wardrobe into a nomadic site of experimental institutional formats. His roving *Galerie Légitime*, a “*couvre-chef d’œuvres*,” was an even earlier precedent for the display and distribution of Fluxus objects than Maciunas’s 1963 display in the kitchen of Galerie Parnass (see fig. 38). Presented in July 1962 alongside a “sneak preview” Fluxus concert organized with Patterson at Galerie Girardon on the Boulevard Pasteur in Paris, Filliou’s *Galerie Légitime* was a miniature gallery held in his flat cap. The idea was born one evening during Filliou’s time in Copenhagen in 1960–1961, while in the company of Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint Phalle, and Arthur Køpcke, who laughed at their friend’s idea to launch an internationally itinerant gallery in a wheelbarrow or pushcart. Serious about his plan yet unable to obtain the proper license from the city of Paris, Filliou took the gallery underground, making it indeed illegitimate. Filliou’s final choice of hat referenced the Jewish quarter where he lived, where black-market goods were sold out of solicitors’

coats and hats. The *Galerie Légitime* debuted with a solo exhibition of Patterson's miniature *Poems in Boxes*, montages of poems and found images cut up into jagged puzzle pieces and housed in discarded matchboxes and yogurt and cheese containers retrieved from the garbage bins of Paris. Like an eccentric magician or black-market merchant, Filliou would doff his cap and sales-pitch the gallery's wares to passersby, his favorite clients being the female cashiers installed in the ticket booths of the Paris Métro—a truly captive audience. Beginning at four o'clock on the morning of July 3, Filliou and Patterson escorted the gallery through the streets of Paris, their parcours including visits to the tomb of Gertrude Stein, Auguste Rodin's statue of Balzac on Boulevard Raspail, the galleries Iris Clert, Rive Droite, and J, café Les Deux Magots, and Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* at the Louvre. In both name and format, *Galerie Légitime* was a call for art to come down "*de ses hauteurs*" into the street as well as a demonstrative provocation that, in a society that could drive one to misery or prostitution, anything an artist might do to earn money was legitimate.²¹

Filliou's vision of the outside had a uniquely French valence. His first exhibition was not underground, in fact, but upstairs, on the rooftop above the attic apartment at 36, rue des Rosiers that he shared with Marianne and their infant daughter Marcelline in the Jewish quarter. It was here that Filliou staged an exhibition of visual art in 1961 for no one save the camera of Vera Spoorri (figs. 55, 56). In her images we can see Filliou crouched down, assembling across the rooftop's horizontal expanse objects made from torn cardboard fragments, blocks of wood, wire, string, rope, egg cartons, empty cans, clothes hangers, and hardware. The materials in Filliou's works were always particularly poor. (At the time, the artist's family was so poor that Marianne sold her breast milk and stole boxes of sardines from the supermarket in order for them to survive.)²² If the poet is a bricoleur of the readymade material of language, in his visual art practice Filliou fitfully became an assemblage of readymade, close-at-hand materials.²³ We see him linking together by means of hook and rope individual assemblage-units into series, spelling out a language of objects. The works are not shown hanging vertically in the manner of his subsequent suspense poems, but they are here on the rooftop, like the artist, hanging out. With this improvised exhibition, Filliou self-critically staged his own identity as that of a good-for-nothing artist, one already idling and sputtering out, a failure before he has even really begun. For what kind of debut exhibition takes place on the rooftop of one's own home? Here is Filliou's own recognition that he has already been hung out to dry.

More specifically, Filliou seems to patrol the rooftop like a cat, those "*seigneurs des toits*" (lords of the rooftops) in the imagination of Stéphane Mallarmé, or a chimney sweep (*fumiste*), both symbolic anti-heroes of the Parisian avant-garde.²⁴ His makeshift exhibition, as much a conceptual gesture as a material one, aligned Filliou with the legacy of the *fumistes*, a circle of fin-de-siècle Parisian avant-garde



Figs 55 and 56. Robert Filliou installing a temporary rooftop exhibition, 36, rue des Rosiers, Paris, 1961. Courtesy of Vera Spoerri Mercer.

poets and artists gathered around Émile Goudeau, Eugène Bataille (aka Sapeck), and Alphonse Allais and affiliated with the famous Chat Noir cabaret. According to the manifesto of *fumisme* penned by composer Georges Fragerolle in 1880, the *fumiste* plays the imbecile but is in truth a “brilliant” and “complicated” figure who “beneath a naive, quasi-prudhommesque envelope conceals this core of skepticism”—in short, “a lion in the skin of an ass.”²⁵ The *fumistes* produced texts in the manner of “intertextual bricolage”²⁶ and deployed ambiguous, black humor as a critical weapon of “disdain expressed through the aggression of the hoax.”²⁷ As a well-known precedent of Dada and Surrealism in France, Filliou’s invocation of *fumisme* was, moreover, a veiled critique of the French New Realists’ careerist revival of avant-garde strategies denuded of their political meaning, even if Filliou considered many of those artists his friends. In one summary image we can see Filliou gazing proudly over the scene of his handiwork, but it is in fact an artist portrait turned self-deflating, emasculating gesture. For between his spread-open legs we can see that in the place of a phallus a glove hangs down like a flaccid udder, spilling a number of dice, a sight both hilarious and pathetic. It is no surprise that the industrious *garagiste* Jean Tinguely, a hardworking professional sculptor, wanted nothing to do with this neo-*fumiste* whom he referred to simply as “*le clochard*,”²⁸ this man who was, in the words of Filliou biographer Pierre Tilman, a “maladroit, without talent and without technique.”²⁹

LA CÉDILLE QUI SOURIT, THE ASSHOLE OF VILLEFRANCHE

Filliou’s greatest project of abandonment was one that paradoxically returned him to the center of the Fluxus orbit even as he became geographically isolated from most Fluxus affiliates. In September 1965, he opened a shop in collaboration with George Brecht called La Cédille qui Sourit, or “The cedilla that smiles,” in Villefranche-sur-Mer, a seaside village of 4,000 inhabitants just east of Nice. The two artists had met hardly a year before, when Filliou, on a visit to the United States, appeared at the Cafe au Go-Go for one of the Monday Night Letter events Brecht organized with Watts. Brecht had known of Filliou since the early 1960s and dedicated to him the piece *Cloud Scissors* (1964), a collection of seven event score cards contained in an envelope labeled “music, dance, stories, games, puzzles, jokes, defections, solutions, problems, biography, questions, poems, answers, gifts.” In a gesture prophetic of the assortment of material and conceptual creations the two would develop together at their shop, Brecht presented the work to Filliou upon their first meeting. After returning to France, Filliou feverishly typed up and sent to Brecht a manuscript titled “Partnership Piece,” written in an event score–like format of thirteen movements that laid out a heartfelt plan for collaboratively establishing and sustaining an artist-run bookshop with an ini-



Fig 57. Photographic documentation of George Brecht and Robert Filliou's *La Cédille qui Sourit*, c. 1968. Gelatin silver print by Jacques Strauch and Michou Strauch-Barelli. Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

tial investment of ten thousand francs (roughly two thousand American dollars) split between them. The text portrays Villefranche as beneficially sleepy (read: inexpensive) yet with potential for growth as a near neighbor to cosmopolitan Nice and part of an improving regional art scene.³⁰ It was proposed that Marianne, along with Brecht's partner Donna Jo Brewer, would run the shop while Brecht and Filliou would contribute creatively with artworks and programming. (Marianne and Donna's role in fact proved crucial, as they were often the ones to carry through and administer the artists' ideas while they were off being "café geniuses," echoing the instrumental role of women's labor in New York Fluxus mentioned earlier.) On the back of the document, Marianne left a handwritten note: "Do read between the lines—Robert worked on this all week—We talked and talked—and will be very impatient for your letter."³¹ The proposed venture was not merely a

flippant dropping-out of the cultural, economic, and political systems with which the artists had become disillusioned. It was to be a concerted effort of constructing other models for the art object and its production and distribution, a move with important ramifications for artistic labor and collectivity.

George and Donna signed on. After conceptualizing the selling of his New York belongings as a *Going to Rome Event*, he and Donna settled temporarily in Rome until January 1966, when they joined the Fillious in Villefranche. Their thirty-six-square-meter shop, with its yellow awning and chalkboard sign in the window, in former times a candy store and television repair shop, was located across from an antiques store at 12, rue de May, a steep and narrow street leading down to the Bay of Villefranche (fig. 57). Restaurant kitchen back doors belched out fish guts and sudsy water onto the *rue*, giving it the feel of a back alley, reinforced by the street's culmination at harbor's end in a cramped stone archway, the architectural equivalent of an asshole. This modest choice of site, perhaps typical for a pair of Fluxus artists, should be counterpoised to highly spectacular stagings of other art-world "outsides" in the same moment. One might think, for example, of Warhol's Factory; Claes Oldenburg's *The Store* (1961); one-off stunts like critic Gene Swenson's picketing of the Museum of Modern Art's 1968 exhibition *Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage* to protest the bourgeois consumption of the revolutionary avant-garde; or the monumental, picturesque, and "seemingly undetermined and unbound spaces of negation (the deserts, the Arctic, the moors, the non-sites of industrial wasteland)" chosen by the post-minimalist generation of land artists for their projects of "heroic dislocation."³²

Imagined first as an English bookshop conceived "under the sign of humor," the Cédille was actually, as Filliou has recounted, "a sort of workshop and of shop, of nonshop would we say now [*sic*], for we were never commercially registered, and the Cédille was always shut, opening only upon request of visitors to our homes."³³ The English bookstore model was likely a nod to the Centre Américain des Artistes in Paris, a resource center for many avant-garde poets and the site of a three-day *Domaine Poétique* event in 1963 in which Filliou participated.³⁴ There were few unannounced visitors to the Cédille, or at least ones who were successful in visiting, since the shop did not have a telephone and Filliou and Brecht seemed not to spend much time there. The artists presided more often at one of the nearby cafés, devising more and more of the visual gags they called "One-Minute Scenarios," "dis-inventing" objects, adding tales to their "Anthology of Misunderstandings," or, as Filliou has recounted, talking with Alfred the bricklayer, Antoine the fisherman, Fernand the plumber, or anyone else who happened to drop by.³⁵ The artists called their shop a "Center of Permanent Creation," for they were continually producing research, letters, jokes, puzzles, games, recipes, poems, sketches, events, and all manner of procedural concepts and materials typically cast aside along the way toward producing a finished work. "The center itself is a work of

art,” Brecht offered, “not in the banal sense that ‘everything is a work of art,’ but in the sense that it calls into action all the resources of the one who creates anything at all.”³⁶ It was the hopeful vision of two avowed non-professionals who had decided to dedicate their lives to creative activity.

The Cédille carried materials from a variety of artists associated with Fluxus. On offer were items from Spoerri’s Édition MAT, books from Higgins’s Something Else Press, and the Fluxus multiples produced by Maciunas in New York. Yet none of Filliou and Brecht’s own works initiated there seemed able to be finished; rather, their material structure emphasized the possibility of endless reconfiguration. As photographs of the Cédille’s haphazard displays show, individual works are often indistinguishable from their neighbors or from surrounding works in progress. As part of a project to rethink the conventional environments, goods, and experiences of retail, the Cédille’s wares were not treated as cut off from one another or from the artists’ process of creation. (Notably, the word “retail” comes from the French *retaille*, meaning “a piece cut off.”) It was an appropriate setup for the distribution of editions whose openness to alteration belonged to an unconventional trajectory of objecthood indebted to the readymades of Duchamp and the indeterminate compositions of John Cage. In this way, the Cédille was more akin to an artist’s studio than a white cube gallery. It was an expansion of the model of Fluxus’s artworks in flux into an artist-run alternative economy of production, distribution, and exchange.

The Cédille kept no regular hours and had no tidy, reliable stock of merchandise. Still, it endured until 1968. In March of that year, Filliou and Brecht realized they could not afford to pay rent on the space much longer, and by October they had defaulted on a lease that should have carried the project into 1974. This was also a time of personal bankruptcy for Filliou, who had to declare himself indigent to the French government in order to receive necessary medical care for his daughter.³⁷ If indeed it was meant to function as a sustainable artist-run commercial venture, the Cédille failed in that goal.³⁸ Yet each of the ways in which Filliou and Brecht’s project “failed” was deliberate, in a way. The Cédille playfully critiqued the expanded commodification and capitalization of contemporary art in the 1960s, which coincided with the economic boom of the immediate post-war decades. Meanwhile, Filliou and Brecht, disillusioned by their experiences working with commercial galleries in New York and Paris and having given up their respective professions (and the stable incomes that came with them), willfully abandoned the creative and economic centers of the art world for provincial France. For Brecht, it also marked his permanent abandonment of his country of birth. As Jasper Bernes has argued, such a move was absolutely symptomatic of the growing disaffection of white-collar middle-class workers in the West during an economic period of deindustrialization that began in the 1950s and was dramatically intensifying by the late 1960s.³⁹

Filliou and Brecht hoped the Cédille's business model might reconfigure or provide an alternative structure to existing power relations in the art world. By removing themselves from culture's commercial centers, they might protect themselves from further exploitation. During their time in Villefranche, however, the artists continued to dwell on art world structures and centers, especially as their financial situation became more precarious. Brecht's correspondence from this period records many reflections on frustrated exhibition opportunities with or difficulty receiving payments from Marilyn Fischbach of Fischbach Gallery, Jacqueline Ranson of Galerie J, Yvon Lambert, and Ileana Sonnabend (from whom Brecht in fact received advance payments for a show that never materialized). In May 1967, Brecht contributed the text "Artists and Dealers" to the little magazine *Open*, published out of Nice. Introduced as the first in a series of columns focused on artist-dealer relationships, Brecht's piece was a critical accounting of the business practices of Hein Stünke, director of Galerie der Spiegel in Cologne, from the perspective of artists who had worked with him and had difficulties receiving copies or payments from editions of their work that Stünke had produced and sold. In illuminating these problems, Brecht hoped to bring justice to mistreated artists, or at the very least some transparency, acknowledging that "what is most interesting in the art world is often what is most underground."⁴⁰ By Brecht's account, Arturo Schwartz was the "only strictly honest gallery director I have ever known."⁴¹ Spoerri's response to Brecht's attack on Stünke, written from his own place of retreat at the time, the Greek island of Simi, was very clear on this point: "Let's confess that we are only producers of materials on which some racketeers can speculate. . . . And that's why I'm glad to be here [in Simi] and that's why you should be glad to be in Villefranche."⁴²

In Villefranche, Filliou and Brecht continued to develop works of tenuous materiality and a transmutable object status, a strategy being advanced across the Fluxus scene. As I earlier detailed, the group's activities had become concentrated in New York around Maciunas but still retained shifting international outposts such as the Cédille, which furthered Fluxus aims independent of Maciunas's oversight, much like Higgins's founding of Something Else Press. "So, what was Something Else Press?" Higgins reflected in 1977:

It seems to be [that] it was an outgrowth from Fluxus because I wanted to break out of the charmed circle of New York Avant-Garde activity—which I was never very comfortable with. I was international, but I was also interregional. I was not interested in the New York power structure . . . I was never happy with the New York mentality and I wanted to bypass New York and deal with other countries, other cultures.⁴³

By no means antipodal to Fluxus, then, the Cédille similarly advanced the collective's project in ways that exceeded Maciunas's initial conceptual and administrative frameworks.

If Fluxus artists endeavored to propose alternatives to the high-market art commodity and its attendant notions of uniqueness, material integrity, and cultural and monetary value, then the Cédille represents a key moment within this larger project. Filliou and Brecht, dropouts from the fields of economics and chemistry and suspicious of American corporate culture and politics, pursued anti-instrumental non-work leading to non-objects, which were sometimes available and sometimes not through their non-shop. Through their activities at the Cédille, Filliou and Brecht pursued the artwork's—or, in the operative sense, art *work's*—allegiance to process. They productively mined the relation between formation and deformation, threatening the visibility of their production for the sake of its visibility as something like a play with the political or a play that *is* political.

A CEDILLA, A SMILE, A HOOK, AND A QUESTION

The Cédille's founding principles were perhaps best emblemized by its curious name. In the French language, a *cédille* (cedilla) is the hooklike orthographic sign that attaches to the bottom of a *c* in order to transform its phonetic value to that of an *s*, like so: *ç*. The cedilla is thus a transformational grapheme, entering the scene of language to cause a subtle but meaningful alteration. This curlicue form figures inconspicuously but centrally in perhaps the only financially sustaining object-making practice that Filliou and Brecht undertook at the Cédille: the suspense poems, a format first developed by Filliou in 1961. Filliou initiated the series under the title *Étude d'acheminement de poèmes en petite vitesse* (Study in dispatching poems at low speed), and potential subscribers were identified with the aid of Spoerri's address book.⁴⁴ The one-page subscription announcement sent from the Cédille referred to the format variably as a suspense-poem, object-poem, verse-object, and suspense-poem-object. Along with Maciunas's book-objects and book-boxes, here was yet another hyphenated entity by which Fluxus artists troubled art's conventional object categories. Notably, the term "object-poem" was borrowed from Surrealist works that played with material and symbolic relations between language and objects brought together into a common plane.⁴⁵ Filliou's revival of the format came the same year as MoMA's *The Art of Assemblage* exhibition, in which object-poems by André Breton and Joan Miró were shown alongside their postwar counterparts, including the object-arrangements of Brecht.

As with much of Filliou's practice, his means of innovating upon the object-poem format concerned its form of distribution. Notions of suspense were

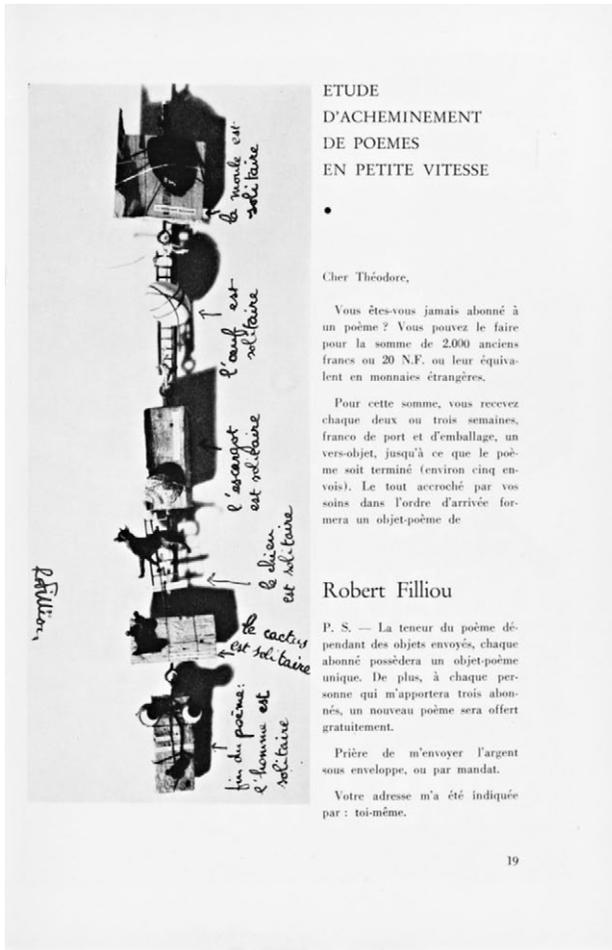


Fig 58. Robert Filliou, illustration accompanying subscription announcement for *Étude d'acheminement de poèmes en petite vitesse*, 1961. Printed in *Phantomas*, no. 50 (1965): 19. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (86-S1667 no. 50). Courtesy Estate Robert Filliou and Peter Freeman, Inc. Art © Estate Robert Filliou.

evoked in the poems' materiality and mode of circulation, for the works were in fact assemblages that subscribers would receive slowly by post, one piece/verse at a time. Each verse-object was typically a wooden support bearing a label of text along with a small image or object, and the support's top and bottom edges were equipped with metal hooks and eyes allowing successive verses to be suspended below. The suspense poems' mode of distribution did everything to upset consumer culture and the instant gratification of the purchase. Production and acquisition were drawn out over an extended period of time and made to overlap, as if they would never end. This caused confusion for at least one devoted Fluxus collector, Jean Brown in Massachusetts, who wrote the artists claiming she was missing the first installment of her poem.⁴⁶ It is doubtful that Filliou and Brecht (or their partners) would err in one of their only profitable schemes at a time when they struggled to pay rent. Still, Brown's misapprehension was appropriate. Take, for instance, a model object-poem created by Filliou, whose components successively read: "the mussel is alone / the egg is alone / the snail is alone / the

dog is alone / the cactus is alone / end of poem: the man is alone” (fig. 58). In other accessible examples of the poems (most have been lost or remain private), eggshells and the shells of mussels and snails appear and reappear, natural objects that double as both armor and a self-contained, portable home.⁴⁷ The phrases are labels for a series of found objects concluded always by the image of a man’s face, which serves to emphasize the ambivalence between the melancholic solitariness of the individual parts and their anticipation of a connection to come. As with Filliou’s earlier urban wanderings, desire and alienation are here dialectically intertwined. Besides containing the phrase “*fin du poème*,” the endings of the poems were marked formally by the last piece’s lack of connecting apparatus. Yet, since the poems were designed to hang from an uppermost catch, there was always the implication that they could be drawn out endlessly, a sense compounded by the seeming randomness of the accumulation of objects, to which any number of others might readily be added.

The suspense poems’ drawn-out fabrication destabilizes meaning, with each new component altering the resonances of the entire composition. They are units in a signifying chain across which meaning vacillates, unwilling to settle—suspended, we should say—a phenomenon further emphasized by viewers’ ability to rearrange the poems’ parts. The sense of conclusion that the end of the poem might bring is contravened by the top element’s extending appendage, ever available for connection. The additive logic of the suspense poem seems to suggest that the surface from which it hangs is part of the work too and, therefore, that the poem itself is merely the conclusion to a visual poetry that extends to the environment around it, and beyond. Meaning continues to unravel. If the Surrealist object-poem’s equivalent treatment of language and objects indicated an expansive, associative model of thought, Filliou and Brecht enlarged this purview to include the physical arena of the work’s reception, encouraging connections between ever more disparate things. Ultimately, where once it seemed that the suspense poems might be the one product of the Cédille marked by finitude or completion, turned on their head they become once again open-ended.

Akin to New York Fluxus’s hyphenated, hybrid objects, Filliou and Brecht utilized the cedilla as an emblematic linking device. Pierre Tilman has recognized the cedilla’s morphological similarity to the small hooks so crucial to the construction of the suspense poems, beautifully explaining the hook’s dual nature as functional and symbolic tool:

Easy to use, [the hooks] are practical and allow the combination of elements . . . that connect to one another, suspend, follow, develop like sequences, phrases, chapters. If this is a history of poetry, then the hooks enter into this history. They resemble question marks, and question marks upside down resemble cedillas.⁴⁸



10

il me manque un espoir
il me manque une idée
il me manque un repas
il me manque un soulier
il me manque un amour
il me manque un foyer

c'est TOI qui me manque

il me manque une auto
il me manque un ami
il me manque du feu
il me manque des muscles
il me manque de l'eau

c'est TOI qui me manque

il me manque une femme
il me manque un boulot
il me manque un cerceau

c'est TOI qui me manque

il me manque un outil
il me manque un sourire
il me manque un oiseau
il me manque un chapeau
il me manque une joie
il me manque un fruit
il me manque un chien
il me manque un rien

c'est TOI qui me manque

il me manque une mer
il me manque un ciel
il me manque un couteau
il me manque un caleçon
il me manque une raison

c'est TOI qui me manque

il me manque un voyage
il me manque un mot
il me manque une brosse
il me manque un lit

c'est TOI qui me manque

il me manque un nuage
il me manque un toit
il me manque une mère
il me manque un roi
il me manque

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

c'est TOI qui me manque



11

Fig 59. Robert Filliou (with photomontages by Gianni Bertini), *Poème invalide*, 1965. Published in *Phantomas*, no. 50 (1965): 10–11. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (86-S1667 no. 50). Courtesy Estate Robert Filliou and Peter Freeman, Inc. Art © Estate Robert Filliou.

In this passage, Tilman identifies another poignant resonance of the cedilla, other than the curl that for the artists looked so much like a smile: it is an inverted question mark. The interrogative, common to the artists' favored discursive forms of jokes, puzzles, and misunderstandings, and visually resembling a hook or an extended hand, creates an opportunity—a demand, even—for connection.⁴⁹ This idea was signified on the small address stamp designed by Brecht that served as the Cédille's logo. Below the shop's address, instead of the typical Dadaist manicule favored by Maciunas is a graphic of two clasped hands, symbolic of the Cédille's founding as a "Partnership Piece" coauthored by Filliou and Brecht, and reiterated in Brecht's favored closing salutation in correspondence at the time: "Handshakes, George."

Experiments with the cedilla as a morphological trope, especially by Filliou, revealed additional meanings. Filliou's *Poème invalide* (Disabled poem), published in the Belgian journal *Phantomas* in the months leading up to the Cédille's opening, includes an image of a body composed of three numbered blocks with cedilla-like appendages (figs. 59, 60).⁵⁰ The image might not read as a body at all if not complemented by a text in the form of a list of things which, as the French word *manquer* richly evokes, the writer both lacks and feels a longing for: a hope, an idea, a meal, a shoe, a love, a home, and so on. Punctuating this list is the melancholic refrain, "it's YOU that I miss."⁵¹



Fig 60. Robert Filliou, *Poème invalide*, 1965. Published in *Phantomas*, no. 50 (1965): 12. Collection of Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Courtesy Estate Robert Filliou and Peter Freeman, Inc. Art © Estate Robert Filliou.

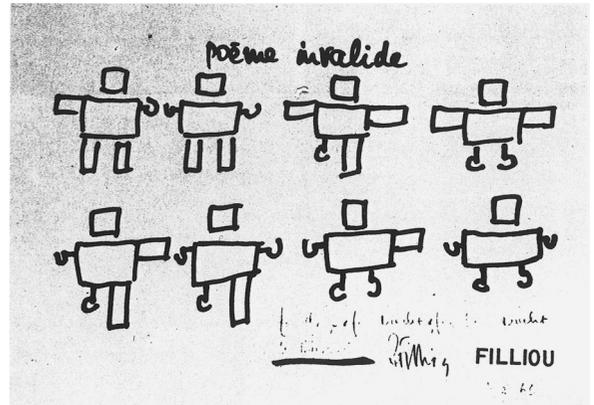


Fig 61. Robert Filliou, *Poème invalide*, 1964, ink on paper. Courtesy Estate Robert Filliou and Peter Freeman, Inc. © Estate Robert Filliou.

Photomontages by the Italian artist Gianni Bertini accompany the first two pages of the poem. At left is a bicycle-riding man whose arms and left leg have been severed from his body. On the facing page, the missing limbs appear in their proper place with respect to the previous image, but with the man's body missing they appear suspended ridiculously in midair. *This* man who lacks gets fulfilled, if only in a delayed fashion. A turn of the page, however, confronts the reader with Filliou's aforementioned geometricized figure, under which the poem arrives at its conclusion. The cedillas of the abstract figure now clearly transform into legs and arms, connectors or receptors that reach for the *toi* called for in the poem. The cedilla-body of the cedilla-man has no beginning, middle, or end. It is defined by what it lacks, what it misses, and that for which it waits: a hope, an idea, a meal, a shoe, a love, a home, you.

In a preliminary sketch of the cedilla-man published in *cc Valise e TRangle* (Fluxus Newspaper #3, 1964)—a sketch that may have been Filliou's first articulation of the idea for *Poème invalide*—we can follow the body's limbs transforming from hermetic protuberances into cedillas, one by one (fig. 61). If the body pictured here is disabled, it is because its expectant gestures are not met, for it is



Fig 62. Robert Filliou, *Permanent Creation Toolbox no. 2*, 1969. Collection Eric Decelle, Brussels. Courtesy Estate Robert Filliou and Peter Freeman, Inc. Art © Estate Robert Filliou.

surely a body made for connection. Filliou's text suggests a fully relational model of subjectivity that, while individual, is also undoubtedly broken (in it, we see the body of the beggar, the amputee, the cripple); it desires to be fulfilled or made able by connecting to others. It was a model lived by the artist himself, who unashamedly depended for his survival on the kindness and generosity of friends who simply reflected the kindness and generosity of their friend Robert back to him. Well aware that this had become his habitual approach to living and working, Filliou once remarked: "The real talent I have is for friendship. Ninety-nine percent of my work is not visible."⁵² And so connectivity, generosity, and friendship became the operative ethic for the Cédille too. In July 1967, Filliou and Brecht cobbled together what extra money they had in order to purchase a ticket for the artist Joe Jones to travel from New York to Villefranche, where he joined Filliou and Brecht, Marianne and Donna, and Takako Saito for the rest of the summer. Jones responded with a touching diagram of his transit, imagined as a series of vectors linked and energized by a "love connector" that would facilitate the passage of a wilted flower into the company of five companions among whom it could blossom again (plate 11). Here, finally, was a Fluxus graphic score composed explicitly as a diagram of relations between subjects.

Filliou's engagement with the idea of connection through the form of the hook was taken to its logical conclusion in a 1969 work, *Permanent Creation Toolbox no. 2*, a metal toolbox containing dozens of plain, rough-hewn wooden blocks with hooks and eyes at their ends that viewers are invited to assemble in any fashion (fig. 62). In contrast to the earlier suspense poems, the unadorned wooden units

were now secondary to their nodes of connection, which had become the work's main visual interest. Rejecting the mandate of aesthetic autonomy, *Permanent Creation Toolbox no. 2* was fully a tool for ongoing action, for permanent creation, for assembling groups of people, and, for a time, granting them common purpose.

REJUVENATING THE ARTS OF GIVING AND OF FAILURE

There were yet other aspects of the Cédille that, like the unfinished quality of the suspense poems, undermined the possibility of the shop's commercial success. For Christmas 1966, Filliou and Brecht invited artists to contribute to the shop's inventory of "objects that could be given to friends as gifts, not in the form of small versions of their personal works, but rather things that would be more difficult to present by conventional means."⁵³ The roster of artists was titled *Tentative de rajeunissement de l'art d'offrir* (Attempt at the rejuvenation of the art of giving), and participants were listed alongside the gifts they had to offer. These included "demi-livres de demi-livre" (half-books weighing 250 grams) from Arman, beads and pendants from Donna, linen bags from Marianne, neckties from Knowles, Vautier's portable holes, and "hieroglyphs" by Williams. Shiomi, Spoerri, André Thomkins, Serge Oldenbourg, Joachim Pfeufer, Jean-Jacques Lebel, François Dufrêne, Mimmo Rotella, and Jacques Mahé de La Villeglé also participated. Clearly, some of the *Décollagistes* did not understand the intention behind Filliou and Brecht's invitation despite the nature of their own unlimited, anonymous, and infinitely repetitious work ostensibly aimed at "the (symbolic) annihilation of the individual producer."⁵⁴ Rotella's initial response to the Cédille's call was the proud announcement that he would submit "un objet très spirituel": "le petit monument à Rotella" offered at 25,000 French francs, an outrageous price given that works were supposed to be available affordably, for between 30 and 300 francs each.⁵⁵ Knowles, a more knowing and like-minded participant, wrote of the project's installation in Paris, "At first glance it seemed like a display of mechanics and plumbers tools available at special bargain rates. I loved it."⁵⁶ Filliou and Brecht saw the gift as an object category capable of evading not only capitalist speculation but also the conventional modes of display that facilitate the translation of cultural value into pure exchange-value. Moreover, to create an artwork-as-gift would set off a chain of giving that is potentially endless, like the connective hooks of the suspense poems or the cedilla-body whose cupped hands signified a gesture not only of entreaty but of offering as well. Accordingly, the poster advertising the exhibition of "unexpected offerings" multiplied Filliou and Brecht's totemic grapheme into a dazzling field of seventy-nine golden cedillas, one for each of the exhibition's artist-givers, each a unique typographical iteration of a common graphic unit (plate 12).

While the Cédille promoted a model of non-instrumental artistic creation, Filliou and Brecht continued to participate in the gallery system elsewhere in Europe, mounting shows in Paris, New York, and Villingen, Germany. But even as they struggled to pay rent at 12, rue de May, Filliou and Brecht pledged to give profits from the sales of their works to relief efforts in Vietnam, where the United States had been engaged in increasingly aggressive and disastrous ground combat since 1965.⁵⁷ In May 1967, Brecht wrote a letter to the General Delegate of North Vietnam in Paris announcing his intention to raise money for medical supplies for the war.⁵⁸ The decision to transform gallery profit into a charitable donation (when the artists were already living on very little) was a way for the philosophy of the Cédille to expand beyond the isolated geography of Villefranche and intervene more proactively in the art market and global politics.

Still, Filliou and Brecht's feelings about both arenas remained quite cynical, as Brecht's "Artists and Dealers" column attests, along with the artists' book *Games at the Cedilla, or the Cedilla Takes Off*, published by Something Else Press in 1967 and the best existing document of the artists' activities in Villefranche. Promoted as an "assemblage of aesthetic researches" meant to ward off "that dread disease to all artists, humorlessitis," *Games at the Cedilla* reads like an avant-garde artist's toilet book.⁵⁹ It includes event score-like descriptions of invented games and conceptual jokes called "One-Minute Scenarios," accounts of conversational misunderstandings, and prank letters sent to local and international authorities—for example, a letter addressed to Lloyd's of London inquiring whether the firm could insure the forty-one-year-old artists against becoming "prematurely senile." Filliou and Brecht's satirical proposals imaginatively mimicked the bureaucratic language of their abandoned professions in order to critique the encroaching administration of everyday life and the art world's perverse fetishization of young artists. The book further includes a proposal for renewable marriage licenses; "The Staffeldt Report," a send-up of the Kinsey Reports that claims to quantify the sexual habits of American artists; and a painfully dark satire of the Great Society, Lyndon Johnson's ambitious package of legislation pushed through Congress in the mid-1960s to address poverty, civil rights, and "the needs of the spirit."⁶⁰ According to critics of the Great Society, the plan's blind utopianism masked its real retrenchment of conservative establishment hierarchies and values. Under the impossible pretense of administrating Americans' well-being, task forces of morally bankrupt, elitist government experts were in fact reinforcing corporatization, centralization, and professionalization while suppressing the most urgent demands of progressive activists, not least of which was the demand for a solution to the unbearable contradiction of waging war in Vietnam while civil rights struggles unfolded at home. Most to the point for artists, as the anarchist literary and social critic Paul Goodman argued in a caustic 1965 takedown, while the government "toys with the obnoxious official art of Arts Councils, glamorous culture centers, and suppers

for the famous . . . free lances are bulldozed from their lofts and it is harder for creative people to be decently poor in their own way.”⁶¹ Filliou and Brecht’s ironic, knowingly offensive twelve-step plan published in *Games at the Cédille* promised to eliminate social strife in the United States by, among other things, sending black American men to Vietnam and then thoroughly bombing the country so as to solve the “male negro problem” and win the war at once, as well as banishing artists to the Mojave Desert and then using their shit to grow flowers so as to bring joy to starving children in the developing world. Next to such outrageous and unsalutary mock proposals, the artists’ actual political gestures continued along the lines of their earlier war relief fund-raising efforts. The year 1971, for example, found Filliou exploiting an exhibition opportunity at Galerie Art Intermedia in Cologne to raise money for the defense fund of Angela Davis. Filliou exhibited nothing but his presence, requesting 40 DM from every visitor and that no photographs or other records be made of the event. A written statement describes the gesture as creating only “availability-value,” “memory-value,” and “solidarity-value.”⁶²

For a time, Filliou and Brecht seemed successful in establishing a provisional, non-instrumental economy—what Filliou called a “Poetical Economy”—built upon innocence, imagination, freedom, and integrity, as a counter to the art market’s “Economics of Prostitution,” in which artists, like sex workers, find themselves in the business of selling their youth (a sign of creative potential).⁶³ Filliou and Brecht’s schemes were ultimately not enough to keep the Cédille afloat financially, but the real failure of the artists’ project was perhaps that their lived alternative to the systems and institutions that troubled them necessitated working in near obscurity. When a childhood friend of Filliou’s once attempted to visit, he stopped multiple times to ask for directions but no one had heard of the place. Unable to locate the Cédille, he gave up his search, thinking it was a clever joke true to Filliou’s nature as he remembered him from their youth.⁶⁴ And so, despite Filliou and Brecht’s vision of an anti-elitist art practice that would reach broadly beyond the socioeconomic boundaries of the art world, the Cédille’s notoriety was in fact quite limited. Two intersecting communities with whom the artists *did* communicate deeply were the decentralized network of their artist-friends and supporters, some of whom made pilgrimages to visit the Cédille, and the handful of Villefranche citizens who came to know Filliou and Brecht as neighbors. The former included Higgins, Knowles, Saito, Jones, Ay-O, Vautier, Arman, Takis, Pierre Restany, Dieter Roth, Dorothy Iannone, Oyvind Fahlström, and Cornelius Cardew; the latter, Alfred the bricklayer, Antoine the fisherman, Fernand the plumber, and others whose identities may never be known. Some exchanges between collectors and fellow artists were captured in letters, notebooks, and photographs, but the dialogues that took place over a glass of wine at the café around the corner from 12, rue de May were real only in the moments their participants

experienced them. To escape the reifying clutches of museums and art history in this way, and to remain instead in the memories of friends and neighbors, may have been the artists' most successful anti-elitist gesture of all.

Filliou and Brecht were clear-eyed about the gradual unraveling of their utopian project, meditating openly on failure and its relationship to creativity and artistic production. They enthusiastically revived the tradition of what they called the "café genius," the artist-character who sits about all day in the public forum of the café inventing countless ideas but realizing few or none of them. The figure of the café genius drew on a French subcultural tradition of the revolutionary potential of laziness extending from the *fumistes* to Paul LaFargue's 1883 tract, "The Right to Be Lazy," to Duchamp, the twentieth century's preeminent figure of the lazy artist, who produced *The Large Glass* over a period of eight years, after which he claimed to have quit making artwork entirely.⁶⁵ Filliou and Brecht's café genius also extended a specifically poetic tradition, going back at least to Arthur Rimbaud, of the artist as a vagabond or vagrant who wanders from place to place, refusing to settle down and take up any work. The threat posed by such a vagabond is that he is without *métier*; he refuses to expropriate his own body as a tool to the tasks of the manual laborer. As Kristin Ross has explained:

To have a *métier*, a trade, a specialty—even an antisocial *métier* like beggar or criminal (both professions who "live by their hands"; in French, *tendre la main* means "to beg")—is to lose one's hand as an integral part of one's body: to experience it as extraneous, detachable, in service to the rest of the body as synecdoche for the social body, executing the wishes of another.⁶⁶

The vagabond rejects the position of both the beggar and the criminal (or pirate, or bandit), both figures we can now see evoked by Filliou's *Poème invalide* via the image of the limb as hook as hand. Following early twentieth-century artistic imaginations of what Hal Foster has called the "double logic of the prosthesis," by which the subject in the face of modern technology is alternately extended and constricted, Filliou pictures the postwar subject as one rent by a distinctly postmodern experience of "dis/connection."⁶⁷ The postmodern subject is "made and unmade," alternately burdened and supported by the economic technology of late capitalism, in a disabling experience of dependence and giving without compensatory return.⁶⁸

In response, Filliou glorified the revolutionary laziness of the café genius in the first proposition of a manifesto titled "Poetical Economy: Towards a New Standard of Value":

People used to make fun of wild, picturesque, tortured artists sounding off in drinking places, and leaving their work unattended. Some still do. They don't

know yet that all of us now are sorts of café-geniuses. Not only do we have more ideas than possibilities of realizing them . . . But many of us don't even try any more. Better, they think, to make my life consistent with my ideals, than to trade them up for some money and illusory fame. So it is high time to rehabilitate the Génies de Café.⁶⁹

Filliou's manifesto was a call to a form of idleness that, like other Fluxus practices I have discussed, approached a radical form of desubjectification. For when we are not working, Roland Barthes has explained, we are simply procrastinating or "marinating" before getting to the work by which we establish our identity and worth. True idleness does not exist in the modern West; to really do nothing would amount to a repudiation or disavowal of the self and the desire for self-actualization, given that "in a situation of idleness the subject is almost dispossessed of his consistency as a subject. He is decentered, unable even to say 'I.'"⁷⁰ The artist as café genius furthermore adopted the anti-disciplinary attitude of Fluxus's new intermedia practices, his attitude toward prevailing modes of modernist art-making resonant with those of protesting students who felt that "the tasks for which they are or were trained by the preceding generation do not seem very exiting [*sic*]."⁷¹ Speaking simultaneously to emerging intermedia forms and the events of May 1968, Filliou explained, "If we want to be free . . . we must not only tolerate but welcome lack of discipline, 'laziness,' spontaneity, fantasy and improvisation"—a position that sought to re-evaluate and reframe his peers' pervasive feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement in the face of outdated, hegemonic institutional cultures.⁷²

Filliou and Brecht's prescient embrace of "idea art" through the figure of the café genius already recognized the impossibility of an artistic creation that could evade the fetish economy of the art market. So, better not to create anything at all. Better to sit in the café and chat with Alfred, Antoine, Fernand, or whoever else happened to drop by. The embrace of art world failure manifested in the anti-fame attitude and dysfunctional working methods of the café genius, who rejected not only the enduring ideal of the artist's solitary studio practice but also the emergent production models of Pop, minimalism, and kinetic art, in which the artist would be instrumentalized as either a socialite/promoter/producer or an industrial/technological worker.⁷³ Filliou became intimately familiar with the latter model through his occasional side work during the Cédille years as fabrication manager of the kinetic, magnetic multiples of the Greek artist Takis. As an economist, he understood very intimately that these innovations in artistic production were not liberating paradigm shifts at all, but merely the next step in the late capitalist economy's commodification and capitalization of creative labor. For artists in New York, these developments were even harder to ignore or escape. In one of many dispatches to the Cédille, Robert Watts

reported on the minimalist sculpture that was beginning to make the scene in museums and galleries there:

The thing now is “primary structures” a show of sculpture at the Jewish Museum—Morris, Judd. . . . It all sort of looks like bad playground sculpture of the housing projects (not quite) but you should read the words and manifestos, just another hard sell. Maybe Kaprow is right—just go out in the woods and forget it.⁷⁴

Next to Filliou’s lauding of the café genius, the second, related passage in his manifesto of *Poetical Economy* was an “Homage to Failures.” “No one admires them,” he writes. “They influence no one. This is great. This is success, for we must get rid of the idea of admiration and of the deadweight of leadership.”⁷⁵ This idea was tested in Filliou and Brecht’s founding of the *Non-École* of Villefranche (Non-School of Villefranche), which posited a radically nonhierarchical structure for education. The school existed materially only in the form of a letterhead giving the addresses of its “non-masters” and the school’s motto: “Carefree exchange of information and experience / No student, no teacher / Perfect freedom, at times to talk, at times to listen.”⁷⁶ We know little of what actually occurred under the aegis of the *Non-École*, but dematerialized, non-instrumentalized productivity was its aim, and its primary activity was free and open discourse between equal participants. Like so many of the artists’ schemes, it was mainly a conceptual proposition and thus perhaps even more anti-institutional than other local initiatives born of the May 1968 events in Paris, namely the *Université Populaire d’Été*, a group of students from the University of Nice who organized meetings, films, discussions, and “free creation” on the Riviera’s beaches, activities Filliou joined once those of the *Cédille* had ceased.⁷⁷

Such failures and unaccountable achievements were for Filliou and Brecht the means to an alternative notion of success, not only because their work resisted incorporation into the capitalist flow of accumulative exchange but also because the artist as an economic subject refused to participate in the hierarchical structure of power and fame that drives the art market and throws its participants into endless bouts of status anxiety. In a published conversation between Filliou and Dieter Roth, Roth asks, “You want to get rid of the general idea that value is something to value?,” to which Filliou replies, “Right, right.”⁷⁸ This was a difficult position to accept even for some fellow Fluxus artists, namely Vautier, who in a published 1965 interview with Brecht in Villefranche becomes noticeably flummoxed by Brecht’s anti-egoistic refusal to judge the importance of his or others’ work. “I generally avoid comparisons,” Brecht says. “I avoid comparing myself to other artists.” We can imagine Vautier throwing up his hands in exasperation as he exclaims, “How is it possible to think like that?! That point of view is entirely alien

to me.”⁷⁹ Filliou and Brecht’s extreme provocations against artistic individualism, which they felt reinforced hierarchical regimes of value in the art world, reached their own limits within Fluxus circles.

Filliou and Brecht’s poetic gestures toward material and interpersonal connection were part of a larger effort to escape an instrumentalized circuit of commodity production, including of the artist’s identity as a kind of creative brand. The model of the *cedilla-body* was one not of instantaneous, one-off exchange but of the desire for constant connection. The suspense poems were not fit for immediate sale and gave the impression of being unfinished. The gifting project, the work of the *café genius*, and the *Non-École* left nominal material traces. In all the activities of their Center of Permanent Creation, the artists seemed systematically to refuse to advance beyond the phase of ideas and processes. To remain in the to-and-fro of process was to perpetuate the exhilaration of possibility as much as it was an allegiance to productive dysfunction, a deliberate courting of failure.

To understand an art that does not prioritize consummate objecthood and its attendant values, Hannah Arendt’s theory of the relation between labor, work, and action is helpful. Mapped against the additive and incomplete nature of the *Cédille’s* activities, it makes sense of the shop’s larger *raison d’être*—to provide a countermodel to capitalist forms of artistic labor and exchange—and allows us to see the project’s ethical and political nature. In her 1958 text *The Human Condition*, a text that responds in its own way to the post–World War II era of cultural and economic reconstruction, Arendt discerns a tripartite hierarchy of human activity characterized by labor, work, and action.⁸⁰ Labor, whose time is cyclical and eternal, is structured by the need to maintain the necessities of existence. Tied to production and consumption, it operates solely in terms of means-ends rationality, and for this reason Arendt likens it to slavery. A second category, work, is also associated with instrumental thinking. Ruled by the principle of “for the sake of,” work has among its goals the fabrication of objects (namely tools) and our entire inorganic environment, and thus it has a definitive end. The last and most valued form of activity for Arendt is action, which occurs immaterially in the speech and actions of multiplicities of communicating individuals. As a counterpart to work, action is world-creating in a non-material, cultural sense, and it is integral to her understanding of the true experience of politics. Special attention is paid to artworks, whose conventionally material nature would tie them to the category of work. (Remember, Arendt is writing in the late 1950s, on the cusp of the art object’s radical transformation and dispersal.) Yet, more than any other kind of object, artworks withstand the vicissitudes of use and time, and so they maintain “a closer relationship to politics than other objects, and their mode of production has a closer relationship to acting than to any other type of occupation.”⁸¹ It is in this sense that artworks can be thought to engender a world outlasting the life span of any individual, communicating across great expanses of space and time.

Commensurately, criticism of the idealist, even anti-materialist nature of Arendt's articulation of politics has not invalidated its relevance for aesthetics; arguably, this quality has made it particularly useful for understanding the value of ephemeral art forms.⁸²

Filliou and Brecht's objects, which were almost not objects, and their artistic work, which was almost not work, threatened to collapse the distinction between object and process. So many of their activities at the Cédille displayed a humble, precarious materiality. The suspense poems were made of wood, found objects, and bits from the hardware store. The gifts were things like holes, hieroglyphs, puddings, and neckties, hardly objects for aesthetic glorification—at times hardly even objects. All that remains of the gifting project is an inventory list, and of the Non-École a piece of stationery, the lessons shared by its non-masters having vanished as spoken words dissipated into air and silence. What remain are only anecdotes, letters, poems, misunderstandings, and jokes—so many scraps that offer only the slightest view onto what actually happened at 12, rue de May. At the price of losing their tangible worldliness, the activities in the brief life of the Cédille moved ever closer to the domain of true politics as envisioned by Arendt without, however, departing from the immanent here and now of the shop's highly localized, day-to-day existence.

OBJECT WITHOUT OBJECT AND THE ETERNAL NETWORK

Following the Cédille's bankruptcy in 1968, out of economic necessity Brecht moved to London and began to mount conceptual projects with the artist Anna Lowell, while the Fillious relocated to Düsseldorf, where Robert worked in Dieter Roth's studio and occasionally taught at the Kunstakademie there. Yet even when the Cédille closed, it did not quite end. Following the principle of permanent creation, it was incorporated into yet another theoretical invention of Filliou's called *La Fête Permanente*, translated into English as the "Eternal Network."

To announce the Cédille's closure, the artists mailed out a poster (fig. 63). In it, ellipses are a recurring punctuation along with commas, another cedilla-like hook, signaling that the end of the Cédille was in fact not an end at all but rather an entry point into the artists' subsequent projects. The announcement subsumed the Cédille under the Eternal Network, a conceptual framework devised to connect the collective production of like-minded artists internationally. Like the nodes of an ellipsis, which signify the possibility of continuation rather than the finitude signaled by the singular period at the end of a sentence, the Eternal Network operated according to a principle of addition that contained within it a constitutive set of gaps. Despite the fact that Filliou and Brecht's poster was the first announcement of the Eternal Network, its language suggested not only that

Il y a toujours quelqu'un qui fait fortune
quelqu'un qui fait...

BANQUEROUTE

(nous en particulier)

La Cédille qui Sourit tourne encore la
page, et puisque...

La Fête est Permanente

annonce la réalisation prochaine de

THE ETERNAL NETWORK

**manifestations, meanderings,
méditations, microcosms, macrocosms,
mixtures, meanings...**

La Cédille qui Sourit, 12, Rue de May, Villefranche-s-Mer (a-m)

IMPRIMERIE ROBAUDI - NICE

Fig 63. George Brecht and Robert Filliou, *Untitled (Banqueroute)*, 1968. Letterpress. Hanns Sohm Archiv, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart. Courtesy Estate Robert Filliou and Peter Freeman, Inc. © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, and Estate Robert Filliou and Peter Freeman Inc.

the Cédille was part of a larger structure that would proceed indefinitely into the future, but also that the shop was part of something that had always been. It was merely one instantiation, one point, one node, of a poetic project onto which a proliferating, infinite network of activities could be added. This (in)conclusion of the Cédille was akin to Arendt's idea that, whereas the meaning of a material thing

is fundamentally contained within that thing, “the meaning of an activity can exist only as long as the activity continues.” The world of action is “a world that never comes to an end and that—although spun of the most ephemeral stuff, of fleeting words and quickly forgotten deeds—is of such incredible enduring tenacity that under certain circumstances . . . it can outlive by centuries the loss of a palpable manufactured world.”⁸³ The inauguration of the Eternal Network was Filliou and Brecht’s final effort to extend the life of the Cédille despite the very real limits in the face of which, it must be admitted, the shop failed in its initial goals.

And yet the concept of the Eternal Network is so capacious as to be almost meaningless. In potentially containing everything, it delimits nothing, a fitful demonstration of the (anti-)logic characteristic of Filliou’s practice and symptomatic of the project of Fluxus at large in its attack on the bases of aesthetic meaning and value. There is one more object (or rather non-object) that we should discuss in this regard, and that is a work fashioned by Filliou upon his arrival in Düsseldorf after the shuttering of the Cédille. Titled *Object Without Object* (1969), it is a wooden post, about as tall as a person, dotted with metal hooks (figs. 64, 65). Off one such hook hangs a wooden block inscribed with the work’s title, and it, too, bears a hooklike appendage (a nail, actually). One may travel the wooden block up and down the various positions marked on the vertical support. Interactive but without useful function or purpose, it is an emblematic Fluxus object without object, a poor, dumb, objectless object hardly recognizable as an artwork. (Indeed, it was easily missed in the location where I first encountered it, leaning against the wall of a throughway in the home of collectors Wolfgang and Ute Feelisch.) The titular inscription’s separation into two parts—“object / without object”—is a declaration that immediately negates itself. If *Object Without Object* is an object that is indeed an object, a thing, it is one that seemingly does not want to be, one that wants to suggest materiality or thingness or objectivity without committing fully to it. The work was Filliou’s answer to the “no-object” generation of his artist-contemporaries, who invented numerous ways to treat materials and objects beyond the given academic approaches to painting and sculpture. As Spoerri has explained, “We all had a concept. César compressed, Arman accumulated, Yves Klein immaterialized, Tinguely motorized, Fontana destroyed. . . . Christo wrapped, I showed a square meter of the world.”⁸⁴ But Filliou, as far as Spoerri could tell, did not have such a concept. Not only was Filliou indigent, a *clochard*, he was without even an artistic concept. He was without-concept.

I would propose, however, that *Object Without Object* was in many ways the perfect conceptual object for Filliou’s practice, and a perfect object-correlate to the Eternal Network. Its hooks imply connections with other objects and other artworks (the suspense poems were only a start), to be connected with ever more objects, and so on and so on, invoking the paradoxical operation at the heart of Fluxus: the stability of the individual artwork is undermined by its excessive rela-



Fig 64. Robert Filliou, *Object Without Object*, 1969. Collection of Wolfgang and Ute Feelisch, Remscheid, Germany. Courtesy Estate Robert Filliou and Peter Freeman, Inc. © Estate Robert Filliou.



Fig 65. Robert Filliou, *Object Without Object* (detail), 1969. Collection of Wolfgang and Ute Feelisch, Remscheid, Germany. Courtesy Estate Robert Filliou and Peter Freeman, Inc. © Estate Robert Filliou.

tionality. Moreover, the relationality of such an object extends beyond Fluxus, calling forth a whole lineage of avant-garde artworks with outreaching hooks suggesting connectivity and expansion, including Duchamp's readymade hat rack and coatracks (1917) and Man Ray's mobile of interlinked coat hangers, *Obstruction* (1920). As connections multiply and one thing is rendered equivalent to or exchangeable with another, the artwork dissipates, disperses, devalues, almost disappears. Filliou's *Object Without Object* is emblematic too of the event score, which diagrammed the contours of an object without giving it final shape, and of the Fluxbox multiple with its shifting contents and pointless exercises. It is an emblem of Fluxus's many objects without object: non-objects, objects that evade a definitive object status, objects that have been forgotten or discarded, objects that no longer exist for us. It is an emblem of all of Fluxus's imagined, gifted, stolen, and lost objects, the collective output of a collective of café geniuses. (Notably, Brecht

once remarked that the most important aspect of the Fluxhall/Fluxshop was the adjacent bar where artists could gather.) Filliou's *Object Without Object* connects to Knowles's *Street Piece* (1962), which instructs, "Make something in the street and give it away." It reaches out to Brecht, Higgins, Knowles, Saito, and Al Hansen's preliminary plans for a "stolen art time-space event" in which works would be designed to be stolen and then their whereabouts tracked and documented.⁸⁵ It relates to the unnoticed or "lost" status of Brecht's events in concert and exhibition settings, as well as to Maciunas's obsession with holes. Across the practice of Fluxus artists, works were made only to be held in perpetual transformation, subjected to purposeless or objectless play, progressively unmade and unworked through time.

Following the Cédille's closure, Filliou continued to develop a series of interlocking theories of alternative economics that he compiled into the pedagogical workbook *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, published in 1970, while Brecht continued to devise arrangements of objects that called attention to subtle perceptual shifts in everyday life. For all this, the Eternal Network functioned as a conceptual underpinning, automatically uniting these diverse activities without neutralizing their differences. In this moment of the 1960s, increasingly recognized as the origin of contemporary art as we know it, the historic model of the cohesive avant-garde artist collective committed to a socially, politically, and aesthetically revolutionary practice began to be replaced by widely dispersed, loose, and overlapping network formations. As such, both sides of Andreas Huyssen's diagnosis of Fluxus remain accurate: "Fluxus is either the master-code of postmodernism or it is the ultimately unrepresentable art movement—postmodernism's sublime, as it were."⁸⁶ For its part, the Eternal Network offered to supplant the notion of the avant-garde collective at a moment when the category "art" had become capacious enough to include seemingly anything. First of all, Filliou reasoned, there was no longer the need for artists to convene in recognized art centers, since anything an artist is doing wherever he or she happens to be can be considered art. Second, the Eternal Network considers art itself to be a network in and through which individuals engage with one another. And third, all human activities are automatically a part of this network, which interlinks with the activities of all other beings and reaches out, as Filliou mystically described, into the "cosmos."⁸⁷ Brecht had already communicated this attitude in a letter to Maciunas wherein he ascribed the same vision to Fluxus as a whole: "GLOBAL ASPECT: Fluxus seems to me a situational . . . phenomenon, a network of active points all equidistant from the center. These points can proliferate, new points arise, at any place on the earth where there is life."⁸⁸ Brecht seemed to suggest that Fluxus could be a code name for the Eternal Network, or vice versa—that the logic of Fluxus was that of a network, the whole of which could be activated by anyone from anywhere.⁸⁹

As with earlier Fluxus plays with hyphens and cedillas, the Eternal Network was a theoretical structure signified by a punctuational grapheme, the ellipsis, a succession of points on their way to becoming a line, a vector, a connector. As discussed in chapter 1, Wassily Kandinsky had long ago theorized the significance of the singular point or node and its double implication of separateness and connectedness:

[W]e look upon the geometric point as the ultimate and most singular *union of silence and speech*. The geometric point has, therefore, been given its material form, in the first instance, in writing. It belongs to language and signifies silence. In the flow of speech, the point symbolizes interruption, non-existence (negative element), and at the same time it *forms a bridge* from one existence to another (positive element).⁹⁰

In the ellipsis the point returns, but instead of signifying interruption and non-existence it is doubled, tripled, made continuous, tending toward a positive, relational resonance as “a bridge from one existence to another.” The idea of relations maintained despite separation, and of silence bridging acts of sound and speech, returns us to the realm of music, to the realm of graphic notation and its uniting of writing, picturing, and action. Following this syncopated line of thought brings us back to the realm of the score and its function of dismantling stable notions of work and authorship.

But we are talking about the Eternal Network, and there is of course no obvious score being performed or realized here. We have arrived, I would argue, at the radical outcome of Fluxus artists’ pursuit of the ends of the experimental logic first posited in the work of John Cage and his 1950s cohort, according to whom, as Robert Ashley has described:

the entire metaphor of music could change to such an extent that—time being uppermost as a definition of music—the ultimate result would be a music that wouldn’t necessarily involve anything but the presence of people. That is . . . the most radical redefinition of music . . . would be one that defines “music” without reference to sound.⁹¹

Filliou and Brecht played with this very idea in a series of fill-in-the-blank scores titled *The Mystery Game I–V*, written during their time in Villefrance and published in *Games at the Cedilla*. These unfinished compositions recast the mediums of painting, sculpture, assemblage, poetry, and music into reduced textual diagrams that lay out a set of qualities and procedural operations able to be realized with varying materials (fig. 66). Of them, the “mystery game” of music is the most radically open, describing simply the putting together of one thing and the next, a

The Mystery Game

III

A Contribution to the Art of Music.

Since Music has to do with _____ (anything)
then if you take a(n) _____ (anything)
and a(n) _____ (anything)
and put them together
you will get music.

Repeat four more times.

Fig 66. Robert Filliou and George Brecht, *The Mystery Game III* (1967), published in *Games at the Cedilla, or the Cedilla Takes Off* (New York: Something Else Press, 1967). Courtesy Estate Robert Filliou and Peter Freeman, Inc. © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, and Estate Robert Filliou and Peter Freeman Inc.

distillation of the logic of music to the logic of connection, the logic of the hook, the logic of the cedilla, of permanent creation, of *and, and, and* . . . With this work, Filliou and Brecht directly acknowledged that among the score model's primary functions and powers is its ability to orchestrate relationships between subjects. Here is a score model, fully unhinged from anything like conventional musical notation, whose logic was taken as the organizing force for the international artistic (non-)community of Fluxus, the "non-group" to which Filliou felt closest.⁹²

In an effort to understand human relationships outside the frame of the individual subject, philosophers Maurice Blanchot and Jean-Luc Nancy have theorized friendship and the creation of community not as a dynamic of amiable conviviality but rather as a form of separation, discontinuity, and absence, in recognition that the connection between two people is also the demarcation of an unbreachable distance—what Blanchot calls a "double dissymmetry."⁹³ Our companions, Blanchot writes, "reserve, even on the most familiar terms, an infinite distance, the fundamental separation on the basis of which what separates becomes relation." This separation is "the interruption of being that never authorizes me to use him [the other], or my knowledge of him . . . and that, far from preventing all communication, brings us together in the difference and sometimes the silence of speech."⁹⁴

A community founded on such relations is in Nancy's formulation a "community without community" "made of the interruption of singularities, or of the suspension that singular beings *are*."⁹⁵ That is, communities form under the threat of their own impossibility, deferral, or undoing, and so the work of the community without community becomes precisely work's opposite: an unworking or *désœu-*

vrement defined by Blanchot as the space of madness, laziness, idle chitchat, and silence. Encompassing overlapping notions of unworking, worklessness, inoperativity, idleness, being unoccupied or at loose ends, Blanchot's *désœuvrement* is the principle of (non-)production that is the engine of the community without community.⁹⁶ To return again to the words of Nancy:

Community cannot arise from the domain of *work*. One does not produce it, one experiences or one is constituted by it as the experience of finitude. Community understood as a work or through its works would presuppose that the common being, as such, be objectifiable and producible (in sites, persons, buildings, discourses, institutions, symbols: in short, in subjects). . . . Community necessarily takes place in what Blanchot has called "unworking," referring to that which, before or beyond the work, withdraws from the work, and which, no longer having to do either with production or with completion, encounters interruption, fragmentation, suspension.⁹⁷

Nancy's language calls up all the various disavowals of object and subject in the realm of Fluxus that I have examined thus far, as well as the group's deliberate positioning on the outsides and undergrounds of various worlds. His invocation of interruption, fragmentation, and suspension speaks directly to the activities of the Cédille, which marked the beginning of the end of Fluxus as Maciunas had imagined it, and exemplified the social solution more realistically adopted by Fluxus artists by the late 1960s despite Maciunas's attempts to develop sustainable creative communes to house his cohort.

The political potential of unproductivity at the heart of *désœuvrement* can be seen as an involution of Arendt's notion of political action in a negative, melancholic mood, in recognition that the most radical encounter with absence and separation around which communities gather is, of course, death. Indeed, one of the last times the first-generation Fluxus community gathered was for the Flux funeral organized to commemorate the death of their chairman George Maciunas in 1978, an event that, as I described in the previous chapter, marked the culmination of Maciunas's Fluxus labors, his final work of art/life. Maciunas's elaborate attempts to control an anarchic group of non-joiners—efforts that were in turns distressing, comical, impressive, and inspiring—were ultimately futile, for Fluxus was in fact a collective without a permanent cast of members or works, as its continuation past the death of its founder very well proved.

As suggested by the episodes recounted at the beginning of this chapter, Fluxus's paradoxical, simultaneous dissolution and continuation had begun almost immediately after its founding in the early 1960s. But a particularly telling stress point came in 1970 on the occasion of its first retrospective accounting in *Happening & Fluxus*, an exhibition organized at the Kölnischer Kunstverein by Harald



Fig 67. Intervention during performance of Benjamin Patterson's *Paper Piece* (1960) at concert associated with the exhibition *Happening & Fluxus*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Köln, Germany, 1970. Photo © Ad Petersen, Amsterdam.

Szeemann with assistance from Wolf Vostell and collector Hanns Sohm. Szeemann's first project as a fully independent curator, the show featured the laudably innovative *Dokumentationstrasse*, an expansive billboard covered over with primary documents that bisected a gallery space otherwise parceled out into miniature solo booths. The *Dokumentationstrasse* elevated the importance of ephemera and supported Szeemann's argument that the artists involved in Happenings and Fluxus had dispersed geographically and expanded in number at the same time that the overall energy invested in each movement had declined.⁹⁸ Many US-based artists could not attend the exhibition for lack of funds, and controversy arose due to the censorship by city veterinarians of Vostell's live cow-birthing event, *Kuh*. The last-minute addition of violent and sexually explicit performances by Viennese Actionists Otto Mühl and Hermann Nitsch further strained the already unmanageable pairing of Happenings and Fluxus. Ben Vautier participated in the most succinct response to these unsustainable conditions: on the occasion of the November 6 opening concert focused on Fluxus performance, Vautier (with the help of Szeemann, among others) concluded a realization of Benjamin Patterson's *Paper Piece* and the entire evening's activities by helping to unfurl a giant banner across the stage that read simply, "FUCK FLUXUS" (fig. 67).⁹⁹ More charitably,

Filliou contributed to the exhibition catalogue a letter addressed to Maciunas in which he lays out the differences between Happenings, which he views as a legitimate artistic genre, and Fluxus, which was only an “anthology made up of people” who contributed to a “pre-revolutionary situation.” What compensated for Fluxus artists’ differences, Filliou suggests, were the immaterial qualities and shared values of “friendship and collaborating,” “comradeship and esteem.”¹⁰⁰

As I have argued, Fluxus’s organizational model, based in contingency and flexibility, has lent the group’s collective practice an impressive and perhaps unexpected longevity and durability. Brecht already sensed this in 1972: “Each of us had his own ideas about what Fluxus was and so much the better. That way it will take longer to bury us.”¹⁰¹ Scholars have struggled to find ways of neatly describing the nature of this alternative community, calling it at times a spirit, an attitude, and a laboratory.¹⁰² If we admit to Fluxus’s fundamental precariousness, if we accept that its relationships were riven by disagreement and geographical distance, we can begin to understand the Fluxus object without object as an appropriate counterpart to the group’s formation. From a community always on the verge of dissolution, of unworking itself, becoming *désœuvrée*, came artworks subjected to a similar unworking, artworks which, in turn, destabilized conventional notions of the artwork and of artistic work.¹⁰³ In light of this, Fluxus seems most significant as a multi-sited effort to redraw the lines of relation structuring artistic collaboration. In turn, this effort produced provocative reconfigurations of authorship and the artwork’s material status, production, and distribution, and proposed alternative models of artistic labor and community-formation for the late twentieth century and beyond. To do this meant operating under the constant pressure of the paradox that, as Filliou explained (cribbing from Guy Debord), “As a group, what binds us is greater than what divides us. Individually, what divides us is greater than what binds us.”¹⁰⁴

GOODA

The Fluxus Virtual, Actually

The end of this book begins with a little story. Several years ago, on a springtime visit to the New York studio of Alison Knowles, in Soho near the flower district, I brought with me a bouquet of yellow tulips, some of the first of the season. The artist immediately arranged them in a vase, which she set in the middle of the low-slung living room table around which we sat and talked. Deep into our conversation, Alison stopped abruptly and exclaimed, “Look! Those tulips are opening.” Indeed the yellow buds, having taken to the water, had relaxed and opened up their blossoms just slightly. It struck me in that moment, more powerfully than ever before, that Alison, like many Fluxus artists, is a first-class noticer of things—everyday things that most people would find trivial or mundane.

To this, I want to juxtapose a contrasting event, for me illuminating as to how Fluxus is understood art-historically today. In 2008, I witnessed the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, a historical survey of interactive art accompanied by a catalogue including essays by the museum’s curator of media arts, Rudolf Frieling, and media theorists Boris Groys

and Lev Manovich.¹ Installed roughly chronologically, the exhibition began with some of the most canonical examples of postwar experimental art, such as John Cage's silent piece *4'33"* (1952), and continued with Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964), Nam June Paik's *Participation TV* (1963), Lygia Clark's *Dialogue: Goggles* (1968), and examples of Fluxus event scores and multiples. Then came Tom Marioni's installation, *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends Is the Highest Form of Art* (1979), a stack of takeaway Felix Gonzalez-Torres posters (1992–1993), and a squat stage outfitted with props where visitors could enact Erwin Wurm's *One Minute Sculptures* (2007–2008). These works, which in sum provided a range of experientially diverse possibilities for interaction, narrated a history of participatory art that led, finally, to a series of galleries sparsely equipped with computer monitors, where viewers could mostly sit and interact via keyboard and mouse with screen-based new media works by Lynn Hershman Leeson, Warren Sack, Johannes Gees, and others.

The new media art conclusion to Cage and Fluxus was written into the exhibition from its very start. A press release explained the curated historical trajectory this way:

From early performance-based and conceptual art to online works rooted in the multiuser dynamics of Web 2.0 platforms, *The Art of Participation* reflects on the confluence of audience interaction, utopian politics, and mass media, and reclaims the museum as a space for two-way exchange between artists and viewers.²

Originally titled *MyMuseum* in a nod to the language of social media, the exhibition came off as a project of historical legitimation for recent new media practices that also retrospectively framed earlier practices as prophetic of what Frieling referred to as a contemporary “internet mindset” of browsing, sharing, collecting, and production in the age of Web 2.0. The implications of this presentist reframing of Fluxus are what I wish to confront here. Do the practices of Cage and Fluxus necessarily lead us to such museum computer rooms? And conversely, what happens to our understanding of Fluxus when we map our present-day “internet mindset” back onto those 1960s practices?

The emergence of this kind of reading of Fluxus at the beginning of the twenty-first century is not surprising. Today there exists a vibrant and ever-expanding community of internet artists who self-identity with Fluxus, and debates recur as to whether Fluxus is still active as a movement, much as they occurred in the 1950s and 1960s around Dada. (Recall that George Maciunas initially referred to his coterie as “Neo-Dada” before seizing on the name “Fluxus.”) Given Maciunas's mandate for the democratization of art and Fluxus artists' critical exploitation of the postal system and available means of travel to build a far-flung, international

collective, the internet and other networked digital technologies seem natural sites for artists seeking to evolve Fluxus ideas. I single out *The Art of Participation* because it is symptomatic of the contemporary reception of Fluxus, often invoked as a kind of art-historical shorthand for legitimating quite incongruous forms of contemporary art—from performance, mail art, experimental publishing, video art, and social practice, to the new media, digital, and internet-based practices included in Frieling’s exhibition.

New media historians and critics including Craig Saper, Christiane Paul, and Charlie Gere have highlighted the dispersed, network-like qualities of Fluxus, claiming that its international reach demonstrates an incipient “network mentality” in postwar art, or that its conceptually driven gestures and objects are fundamentally algorithmic or computational.³ In a book-length survey of digital art, Paul writes that Fluxus works “based on the execution of precise instructions whose fusion of audience participation and event as the smallest unit of a situation in many ways anticipated the interactive, event-based nature of some computer artworks.”⁴ A version of this argument formed the basis of a 2018 exhibition Paul curated at the Whitney Museum on “programmed” art based on rules, code, and choreography, which reinforced and furthered certain dimensions of the narrative Frieling had earlier presented at SFMOMA.⁵ When Paul elsewhere defines digital art as “process-oriented, time-based, dynamic, and real-time; participatory, collaborative, and performative; modular, variable, generative, and customizable,” it seems she could easily be describing Fluxus.⁶ Saper devotes an entire chapter to Fluxus in his scholarly history, *Networked Art*, declaring that the collective’s most important contribution to postwar art history is “making networking situations into artworks.”⁷ In a scholarly anthology focused on precursors to internet art, Owen Smith concisely encapsulates this line of argument and its willful collapse of the language and ideas of Fluxus with those of the internet when he writes, “Even though much of Fluxus existed prior to the age of the computer, the internet, the World Wide Web, hypermedia, and hypertext, Fluxus’s activities and attitudes present many of the most important realizations of network culture, many of which we are now only rediscovering.”⁸ In such accounts, Fluxus is understood foremost as a group of artists who, despite separation by great distances, constituted a functioning, close-knit community, and historians describe this community in the technological language of the network as a way of indicating these artists’ recognition of “the potential of the systems themselves as art.”⁹ Smith furthermore writes, “[I]t becomes clear that Fluxus is more of a virtual space than it is a particular art historical group with a finite set of geographic and chronological parameters.”¹⁰ “This is not to say that there are no boundaries, materials, or objects in Fluxus,” he admits, “but that they are less important and ultimately inconsequential in the processes of change and creation of possibilities.”¹¹ More recently, Roger Rothman has related

Fluxus's interventionist gestures and dysfunctional commodities to the subversive hacker culture that developed contemporaneously in MIT's computer labs.¹² Through these accounts, we witness the recasting of the Fluxus viewer as a "user" and the anachronistic application to artists' practices of terms like "open-source" and "hypermedia" until the entire project of Fluxus is circumscribed by its virtual existence as an incipient worldwide web of creative activity. Following this logic, one could argue that the ostensible breakdown or failure of Fluxus activities by the late 1970s has been finally redeemed by new media practices that are only now able, because of improved technological capabilities, to fully realize the group's goals.

And yet, against such accounts, and despite my own claims for the art-historical significance of Fluxus's "Eternal Network," I find it urgent to recuperate the ways in which Fluxus works warned against and were insistently opposed to technological mediation. Fluxus works were for the most part deliberately anti-spectacular, anti-technological, and anti-digital—radically analog. Fluxus strategies, including those directly engaged with technology and emergent network aesthetics and social formations, were developed precisely to critically *resist* the dematerialization and virtualization of the artwork, the image, and the sign at the earliest moment of the cultural shift we now recognize as postmodernism, often pitting technology and computational processes against the human body and its intransigent fleshiness, excessiveness, vulnerability, ridiculousness, and sexuality. Fluxus was certainly innovative in developing alternative means of organizing creative activities and in distributing work outside the art world's mainstreams, but this was not the collective's singular defining characteristic. It may not even be the most enduringly important one, despite our contemporary global politics in which the interconnectedness of economies, societies, and individual people is seen simultaneously as both a profound ontological threat and source of well-being, if not survival.

As this book has aimed to show, at the same time that Fluxus's score-based practice emphasized the work's fundamental translatability, it also defended the importance of the uniqueness of each material instantiation. In other words, the network is not where the Fluxus artwork or the meaning of its critique ends, for every one of the innumerable tentacles of the Fluxus nexus culminated in an intimate encounter between beholder and artwork, an experience utterly singular and material. We should not consider the circulation of Fluxus works apart from their material specificity and resolutely corporeal address, for if Fluxus practice was buoyed by the utopian ideal of an international network, its works did not find their critical ground of operation in that extensible, virtual space. They were directed at the transformation of concrete experience in very specific, localized temporal domains that were often quite private and resistant to the mediation of still and moving images.

Recall that in Maciunas's proto-Fluxus manifesto of 1962, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art," readymade and indeterminate methods and materials were advocated as the best means of resisting the artificiality of illusionism and abstraction. "Anti-art is life, is nature, is true reality," Maciunas declared:

Rainfall is anti-art, a babble of a crowd is anti-art, a sneeze is anti-art, a flight of a butterfly, or movements of microbes are anti-art. . . . If man could experience the world, the concrete world surrounding him . . . in the same way he experiences art, there would be no need for art, artists and similar "nonproductive" elements.¹³

Certainly there is a fetishism at play here, but it is not a fetishism of networks or of unfettered communication; it is a fetishism of the everyday valued as the essence of concrete experience, the essence of whatever was left in culture after modernism that might constitute "the real"—a fetishism admitted to by the artists themselves. "[T]here was almost a cult among the Fluxus people," wrote Dick Higgins in 1972:

or, more properly, a fetish, carried far beyond any rational or explainable level—which idealized the most direct relationship with "reality," specifically objective reality. The lives of objects, their histories and events were considered somehow more realistic than any conceivable personal intrusion on them.¹⁴

Fluxus artists were not alone in their allegiance to the concrete, although their methods were singular. In the late 1950s and into the 1960s, the turn to everyday, common objects was a key tactic in neo-avant-garde efforts to challenge the alienating effects of modernist aesthetics and mass culture. This focus on the object, which I detailed in chapter 3, was an assault on two linked phenomena of the time: the mass-production of waste incurred by the industrial strategy of planned obsolescence and the establishment by mass media of a virtual reality of spectacle and simulation. Jasper Johns incorporated into his work the detritus of the newly wasteful postwar consumer culture, Robert Rauschenberg appropriated remnants from historic architecture being razed for modern urban developments, and Claes Oldenburg fabricated pathetic sculptural replicas of household goods to sell from his chockablock marketplace, *The Store*. But these gestures were not radical enough for Fluxus artists, who set off to press further the limits between the production and appearance of art and the materials and experiences of life.

Accounts of new media that celebrate the virtual space of intermedia artistic networks for initiating a break with modernist mediums and practices repress the fact that a certain notion of virtuality had already defined the high modernist artwork and its concomitant viewing experience. Specifically, the mode of expe-

rience privileged within modern art discourses—transcendent, disembodied, purely optical—anticipated qualities characteristic of contemporary experiences of virtual space in the digital realm. For Clement Greenberg, the successful modernist artwork presented the illusion “that matter is incorporeal, weightless, and exists only optically like a mirage.”¹⁵ Likewise, the attendant subject of this modernist virtuality was described as being disembodied and wholly, eternally, immaterially present. As Rosalind Krauss has argued, modernist art’s transcendent zips, targets, chevrons, and sprays instated a mirroring “reciprocity of absence” between artwork and viewer. “What we have here,” she writes, “is . . . not exactly a situation of non-presence but one of abstract presence, the viewer floating in front of the work as pure optical ray.”¹⁶ This mirage-effect has been carried forth from the high modernist field through the image worlds of Pop art to contemporary forms of screen-based new media in which the subject becomes a function of the image, dependent upon and either subsumed or alienated by it (possibly both). It was against this encroaching mirage-effect, whose presence was already felt in art and mass culture of the 1960s, that the neo-avant-garde’s counterspectacular practices were positioned. In the wake of modernist transcendentalism, tendencies such as New Realism, Happenings, Fluxus, and minimalism amounted to so many efforts to thrust the viewer ever back into an awareness of the here and now.

The embrace of Fluxus by new media artists, curators, and historians stems from art-historical accounts that position Fluxus as a dematerialized proto-conceptual art of unfettered communication, whose ostensibly anti-art stance was equally anti-object. However, as I have stressed, the Fluxus turn to language—an admittedly abstract, symbolic material—was primarily a means for the artwork to incorporate the material conditions of each situation in which it would appear. Along these lines, Maciunas’s 1962 “Neo-Dada” manifesto called for an art that would be like an “automatic machine,” enabling form to be created independently of the artist-composer.¹⁷ The Fluxus event score—the collective’s most basic technology—was precisely this. It harnessed language in order to disconnect aesthetic form from a definitive, enduring material existence, instead rendering it transitive and ambiguous—qualities owed as much to the operations of musical notation as to the poetics of the written word. This turn to the medium of language, both textual and graphic, was a necessary means for the artwork in flux, whether performance or object, to materialize more individually and concretely in varied contexts. As Higgins explained, “In its most extreme manifestations, Fluxian intermediality dispenses with media. For Fluxus, reality is the medium, experience the utensil, and language the means of distribution.”¹⁸

Perhaps more than any of Maciunas’s statements, Higgins’s concept of intermedia, introduced first in the manifesto-like tract “Intermedia” in 1966, has been embraced as a prescient defense of new media art due to its call for an untramed approach to combining and integrating diverse mediums.¹⁹ Higgins took

up the term in order to describe the myriad work he had witnessed since the late 1950s that fell “between media,” work that occupied the “uncharted land that lies between” existing categories of practice.²⁰ Among Higgins’s examples are Joe Jones’s kinetic, self-playing mechanical instruments, situated between music and sculpture, and Robert Filliou’s object-poems, situated between poetry and sculpture.

By the early 1980s, however, Higgins reflected that intermedia “shortly acquired a life of its own,” and “the term was mis-used and it became chic”—its meaning expanded and diluted in ways that ensured Higgins’s political ambitions for it would fall short.²¹ On the one hand, intermedia in popular culture had come to signify an offshoot of expanded cinema characterized by all-encompassing, disorienting mass spectacles of multisensorial media collage incorporating architecture, sound, projected light and film, strobes, and sometimes tactile and olfactory stimuli as well. Quasi-commercial touring enterprises such as the media art collective USCO and Andy Warhol’s Exploding Plastic Inevitable sought to merge the experiences of the nightclub and art gallery through total synthesis on all levels: between artistic mediums, subject and world, subject and subject, and even intra-subjectively, as participants were thought to access untapped regions of consciousness through a kind of aesthetically induced intoxication akin to an experience otherwise provided only by LSD.²² With this work, the connotations of intermedia’s expanded approach to the conceptualization and categorization of artistic mediums were overwritten by a preoccupation with “media”: a proliferation of new technological apparatuses and combinations thereof that the beholder was newly challenged to navigate.

On the other hand, intermedia entered academia as a new disciplinary track vaguely defined by an experimental, post-Happenings combination of performance and video, as in Hans Breder’s first intermedia MFA program founded at the University of Iowa in 1968. These two veins of intermedia rapidly, increasingly merged. Many of USCO’s performances took place on college campuses as part of the touring Intermedia ’68 festival, organized and managed by the young MBA and entrepreneur John Brockman, which also included projects by Les Levine, Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Carolee Schneemann, Trisha Brown, Terry Riley, Ken Dewey, Allan Kaprow, and even Dick Higgins (although the intermedia work that Higgins himself promoted was much more modest in form). By 1970, Gene Youngblood had reported in his genre-defining book *Expanded Cinema* that USCO had partnered with behavioral scientists at Harvard to form the Intermedia Systems Corporation with the goal of developing technologically sophisticated forms of “entertainment *as* education.”²³ In the contemporary digital realm, these fantasies have returned in the guise of new media works’ shared basis in numerical code, which is thought to allow for infinite possibilities of “transcoding” and “programming.”²⁴ All forms of media

are seen to converge through a unifying tissue of computer languages that effectively erases their underlying distinctions.

We should remember, however, that Higgins's concept of intermedia described a dialectical approach of working *between* discrete existing mediums, achieved by mapping the language, structure, and/or ways of thinking of one medium onto another. To demonstrate this, Higgins's score *Intermedial Object #1* (1966) proposed fantastical objects whose characteristics are determined along a continuum between two poles represented by two quite dissimilar objects (fig. 68). Elsewhere, Knowles and George Brecht referred to their objects as books, pages, and footnotes; Brecht referred to an encounter with any of his works, whether text, object, or performance, as an event; Filliou produced sculptural assemblages

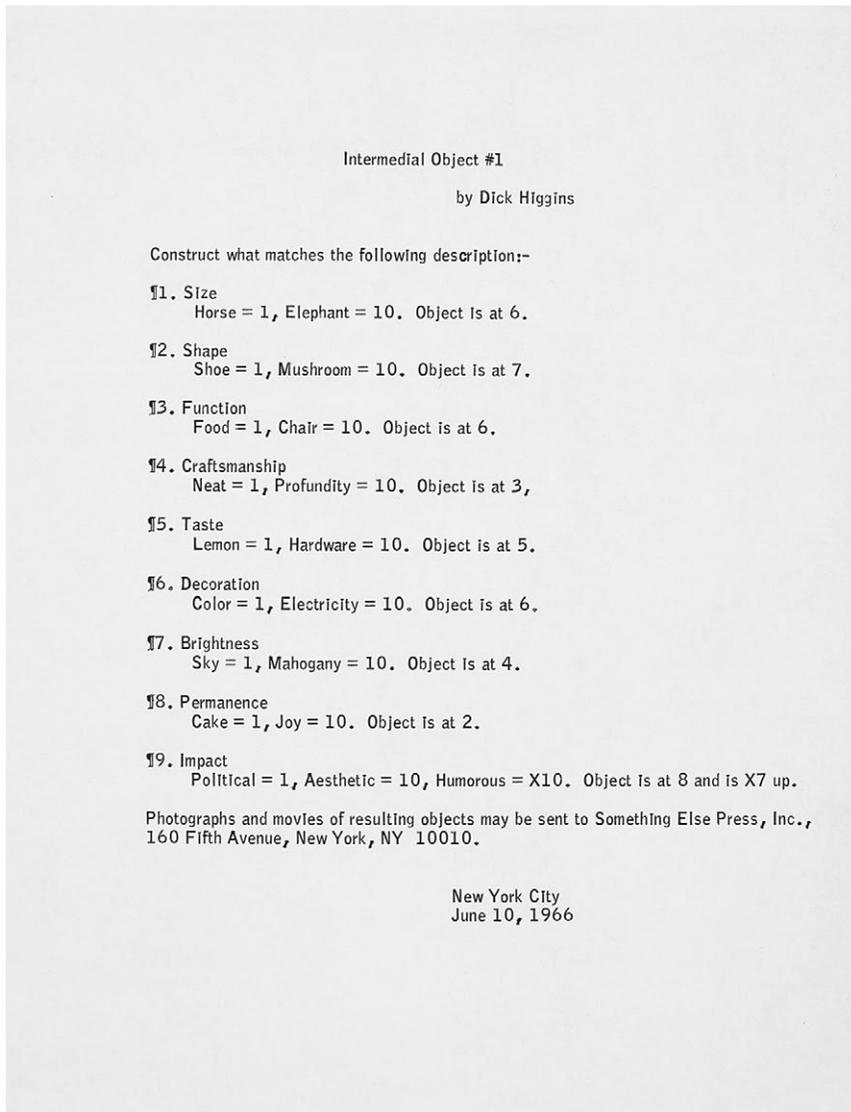


Fig 68. Dick Higgins, *Intermedial Object #1*, 1966. 11 x 8 1/2 in. (27.9 x 21.6 cm). Collection Walker Art Center, Walker Special Purchase Fund, 1989, 1989.202. Courtesy of the Estate of Dick Higgins.

he called poems; and one Fluxbox after another provoked the beholder to reconsider the stuff of everyday life under alternative rubrics such as time, food, and medicine. Numerous Fluxus works address boundary conditions where one thing meets another, transcends a limit to become something else, or is exchanged with a proximate yet unlike thing.

Above all, Higgins's notion of intermedia supported an aesthetic of "simplicity" and a return to "basic images" as a counter-experience to or escape from mass media. This he argued in a companion text, "Statement on Intermedia," published in Wolf Vostell's journal *Dé-coll/age* in 1966, and which I discussed in chapter 3. In this text, the political stakes of intermedia were made overt, as Higgins characterized its in-between position as being motivated by a sense that existing categories of artistic production were inadequate for responding to a moment in which, due to new media technologies, "our sensitivities have changed." Modern art, Higgins felt, had simply not kept up. With manifesto-like zeal, he sets his sights beyond modernist aesthetic quarrels, calling to mind the backdrop of the Vietnam War (at that moment in its eleventh year) and emergent labor, civil rights, and feminist struggles as he poses questions about the collective ambition and future direction of contestational neo-avant-garde practices:

Due to the spread of mass literacy, to television and the transistor radio, our sensitivities have changed. The very complexity of this impact gives us *a taste for simplicity*, for an art which is based on the underlying images that an artist has always used to make his point. As with the cubists, we are asking for a new way of looking at things, but more totally, since we are more impatient and more anxious to go to the *basic images*. This explains the impact of Happenings, event pieces, mixed media films. We do not ask any more to speak magnificently of taking arms against a sea of troubles, *we want to see it done*. The art which *most directly* does this is the one which allows this *immediacy, with a minimum of distractions*.²⁵

The viewing experience Higgins characterizes is not one of omniscience and transcendence but rather an active, highly physical, and immanently material spectatorship called into being by the artwork itself. Far from an optimistic fetishization of the technological, Higgins's vision of intermedia meant to engage political and social contexts in a more direct or concrete, that is to say *less* technologically mediated, fashion. It could be a Fluxus mantra: a taste for simplicity, immediacy, basic images, most directly, with a minimum of distractions. We want to see it done.

Of course, it is Nam June Paik's work with video, television, and broadcast technologies, the earliest examples of which were coincident with his participation in Fluxus, that has provided historians with the strongest link between Fluxus and contemporary new media. Yet Paik imagined his work with electronics



Fig 69. Nam June Paik, *Exposition of Music–Electronic Television* (exhibition view), 1963. Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, Germany, March 1963. Photo: Peter Brötzmann. © Nam June Paik Estate.

from the beginning as a humanizing, critical “anti-technology technology” that depicted mass media technologies as dysfunctional and alienating.²⁶ Paik’s first significant body of work incorporating televisions was presented in March 1963 in his *Exposition of Music–Electronic Television* at Galerie Parnass, the same venue where Maciunas had presented his proto-Fluxus “Neo-Dada” manifesto nearly a year before, and where prototypical Fluxus objects were now on view in a small display in the villa’s basement kitchen (fig. 69; see also fig. 38). In one room of Paik’s exhibition, eleven TVs were cast seemingly randomly about the space, including many on the floor, their broadcasts made illegible by manipulations to their circuitry. One set was laid screen-side down. Several were made interactive by means of pedal switches, microphones, and external sound sources as a way to transform viewers’ typically sedentary encounter with television into a full-body experience. Following the example of Cage’s prepared pianos, which treated the piano as a whole, concrete object to be played on any of its surfaces, Paik presented the television as a three-dimensional object rather than merely an image projection device metonymically identified with its screen. Paik furthermore took a microscopic, materialist view of television electronics, calling attention with his manipulations to the physicality of a TV broadcast’s energy particles and waves.

David Joselit has argued that in Paik’s work, the “‘dematerialized’ mobility of the network was stabilized as an object of spectatorship.”²⁷ But that was not all—Paik’s objectified apparatuses were to be interfered with, fondled, worn. Paik referred to his TV works as “physical music” and “time art,” another mode of accessing the concrete to which he readily compared very low-tech works like his event score *Fluxus Champion Contest* (1962), a performed pissing contest.²⁸ His pianos, TVs, and manipulated electronics explored the “possibilities of combining many senses; touching, blowing, caressing, seeing, treading, walking, running, hearing, striking, etc.”²⁹ An altered record player, *Listening to Music through the*



Mouth (1962–1963), was rigged so that beholders had to insert the turntable needle’s arm, dildo-like, into their mouths (fig. 70). Calling for a bodily incorporation of technology, listening in Paik’s works necessitated touching, and aural experience crossed into orality.

Paik pursued a technological art of the concrete that rendered mass media spectatorship highly material and phenomenologically rich. His work was poised against the reality of a scene he once recounted having witnessed at a New York dance club:

[I] was stunned . . . there were more than 1000 young people . . . mostly with their dates. 90% of them neither kissed, nor danced, nor . . . even touched . . . hands. They were just looking [at] a big TV projector, which . . . [showed] . . . banal pictures, such as old movies or Rock [&] Roll music or Elvis, which they have seen most of their lives in their home TV set or movie house.³⁰

In response, Paik exhibited wrapped TVs, burned-out TVs, organic materials fashioned into TVs, TVs eviscerated and overtaken by nature. By the late 1960s, he was known among his peers for working specifically with outmoded and obsolete devices in ways that emphasized media technology’s tendency toward rapid obsolescence. Allan Kaprow wrote in 1968: “His pianos . . . were old and irreparable, and his television consoles are cast-off derelicts from Canal Street.”³¹ Cage described Paik’s work as simply “Wires and more wires”; an “image of utter col-

Fig 70. Nam June Paik demonstrates *Listening to Music through the Mouth* (1962–1963) at *Exposition of Music–Electronic Television*, Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, Germany, March 1963. Collection of mumok, Vienna. Photo Manfred Montwé © montweART.

lapse.”³² These qualities accorded with the handmade aesthetic that characterized many Fluxus objects, even when they incorporated the readymades of advanced industry. As Higgins reflected, Fluxus “does not seem to participate in the age of technology, with the exception of the material substances on which works are printed or in which they are packaged, which are often chemically very sophisticated [e.g., plastic] but handled as if they were—wood.”³³

Paik himself conceived of his work as complementing that of his more Ludite Fluxus peers, writing in a 1966 manifesto, “Cyberated art is very important, but art for cyberated life is more important, and the latter [cyberated life] need not be cyberated. Maybe George Brecht’s *simpplissimo* is the most adequate.”³⁴ Indeed, Brecht’s event scores were a kind of Fluxus anti-technology, an automatic machine designed to produce unmediated experience, to re-create the artwork anew, over and over again, for each and every now. Likewise, Liz Kotz has described the logic of the event score as a two-part process, in which “a ‘general’ template or notational system . . . generates ‘specific’ realizations in different contexts.” In this logic of specification, “the template, schema, or score is usually not considered the locus of the work, but merely a tool to produce it.”³⁵ Purposefully evading a definitive, fixed form, the Fluxus work materializes again and again, with each appearance revealing yet another dimension of the work’s potential, as if it were an infinitely faceted jewel.

And so there is indeed a notion of the virtual operative in Fluxus, I would argue, although it is not the virtuality of networked space. It is rather the temporal virtuality of the artwork forever in-becoming through time. The plain language of most Fluxus scores, chosen for its affectlessness, keeps the work’s form radically uncircumscribed such that the general-specific dualism Kotz describes might better be named in terms of philosopher Henri Bergson’s dualism of the virtual-actual, which he proposed in place of the possible-real.³⁶ For Bergson, whose work at least Cage and Brecht knew, the relationship of possible to real assumes a situation in which the real is simply one scenario that wins out over a set of predetermined possibilities, whereas the idea of the virtual-actual entails the possibility for the actual to unexpectedly diverge from the known. The former is limited to relationships of identity; the latter contains the possibility of spontaneous difference. It is a subtle differentiation, but it has everything to do with the way we exist in, understand, and interact with the world. Gilles Deleuze, writing on Bergson, has well defended this point:

It would be wrong to see only a verbal dispute here: it is a question of existence itself. Every time we pose the question in terms of possible and real, we are forced to conceive of existence as a brute eruption, a pure act or leap which always occurs behind our backs and is subject to a law of all or nothing. What difference can there be between the existent and non-existent if the non-

existent is already possible, already included in the concept and having all the characteristics that the concept confers upon it as a possibility?³⁷

Instead of deriving the real from a finite set of predetermined possibilities, this notion of the virtual gives us conceptual access to that particular quality of Fluxus works which maintains the potential for ushering forth the utterly new. This projective, temporal virtuality of the Fluxus work—always in-becoming through its appearance as multifarious versions of the concrete—could not be further from the spatial and phenomenological virtuality of digital forms of communication and participation, in which, as Boris Groys admits in his text for *The Art of Participation* catalogue, “the body of the person using the computer is of no consequence. . . . One falls into a state of self-oblivion, of unawareness of one’s own body.”³⁸

Hannah Higgins, who has considered Fluxus in relation to early computer art, reminds us that in the early 1960s, “most computers were real people,” that is, a person employed to make calculations. In this sense, Fluxus work “could be characterized as ‘computer’ art of the human kind.”³⁹ But it is also an art that immediately registered how the body always exceeds the technological. Both score and Fluxbox are a kind of container for corporeal experience, establishing a temporary commons of interpersonal, multisensory presence activating not just vision but also touch, taste, and smell. In scores by Maciunas, Higgins, and Benjamin Patterson, the body’s limitations and frailties, its awkwardness, its resistance to dematerialization or fungibility, are exaggerated, not mitigated, by rigorous tabular and diagrammatic structures of organization, drawing our attention to the dynamics of Fluxus being about both flows *and* stoppages (see figs. 21, 22, 23). If anything, Fluxus algorithms or codes, materialized in the rules of an event score or the rationally compartmentalized container of a Fluxbox, worked as a foil to illuminate what *cannot* be contained: the shit of life (sometimes quite literally).

To take another frequently cited example in new media–focused histories of Fluxus, in 1967, Knowles worked with James Tenney at Bell Labs to produce a computer-generated aleatoric poem, *The House of Dust*. The poem employed FORTRAN to combine in every possible permutation prewritten phrases that describe a house in terms of its materials, site, light source, and inhabitants. But the poem was not an end in itself. Nicole Woods has detailed how Knowles treated one quatrain—“A House of Plastic / In a Metropolis / Using Natural Light / Inhabited by People / from all Walks of Life”—as a score for constructing several small structures at CalArts in the early 1970s, which became a temporary hub for experimental performance.⁴⁰ The poem was also dropped from helicopter over the campus, making of the dot-matrix printout an array of paper ribbons that elegantly twisted their way through the sky. According to Hannah Higgins and Douglas Kahn, “The key to Alison Knowles’s going beyond the technological limits of dig-

ital computing was her placing of the dedicated output, i.e., the printout of the text, amid the ever-changing contingencies of social and poetical practice.”⁴¹ To my mind it is absolutely not a coincidence that Knowles’s poem—an homage to different ways of cultivating domestic space—emerged in a transitional moment for Fluxus, when collective energies became focused increasingly on ritualistic events, banquets, and housing projects—all various retreats into spaces and experiences of relatively private, yet still communal, interpersonal encounters.

Fluxus objects and gestures were recalcitrant to an art market that demanded (and continues to demand) unique, precious, individually authored things *and* to an image culture that demanded (and continues to demand) continuous circulation of consistent, recognizable images. Fluxus’s rejection of abstraction and illusionism was at first pitted against an art world dominated by modernist aesthetics epitomized by abstract painting, which seemed unwilling to engage the rapidly changing culture to which neo-avant-garde artists felt an urgency to respond if not reject outright. The counterspectacular, immanent quality of Fluxus’s everyday objects and gestures opposed the disembodied, transcendent, purely “optical” viewing experience upheld by modernist institutions and discourses. Fluxus artists’ artworks in flux, different dimensions of which I have articulated across the chapters of this book, also resisted a popular culture of mediated images and commodity fetishes. In our desire to read Fluxus as a portent of contemporary new media art, we may misapprehend the collective’s most important lesson for the present, which I take to be its model of iconoclastic rejection of telepresence, in favor of experiences of intimate, face-to-face communion. In other words, the narrative of this book, figuratively speaking, ultimately turns away from the museum computer room and toward that modest vase of yellow tulips set on the living room table.

Opened in 2008, *The Art of Participation* could not yet take stock of the post-internet aesthetic of an emerging generation of artists whose work celebrates fluid, self-made, augmented identities and realities, a new wave of new media art that has already claimed its roots in Fluxus.⁴² But the promiscuous position-taking of much post-internet art, while typically read as generous and open-minded, can be frustrating in its elusiveness, an embrace of multipositionality that avoids committing to any position at all. Digital natives (myself among them) ought to recognize as 1990s nostalgia the fantasy that digital communications and networked images allow for a post-identity society, especially at a time when identity categories—their rights, visibility, protection, and security—are in reality becoming more entrenched or under attack in frightening ways.

In light of these arguments, I will conclude by proposing two possible alternatives for locating Fluxus’s legacy within contemporary art, which run counter to what has been offered in the discourse around digital, new media, internet, and post-internet art.⁴³ The first alternative trajectory would be an art that seeks

to eliminate mediation entirely, as in the performance work of Tino Sehgal, which is foremost invested in direct encounters between human bodies in real space, even at the point of the artwork's transmission from artist to collector. Sehgal's works consist of moving bodies, speaking bodies, bodies that ignore us, avoid us, or proposition us. As a rule, he does not allow his works to be photographed or filmed, though admittedly there are illicit exceptions. Symbolically, at least, and in critical recognition of the machinations of the art market and life in general under globalized capitalism, Sehgal's work values human beings and unmediated intersubjective experience above all. The second alternative would include practices that utilize the internet as a means of launching relationships and experiences that ultimately exceed that platform. I am thinking, for instance, of Los Angeles artist Adam Overton's website UploadDownloadPerform.net (2008–2014), a once-active open-access wiki repository of performance scores meant to be downloaded and performed in real space-time. Overton's instructions for how to use the site constituted a kind of performance instruction in and of itself: "*in any order, all, some, or [n]one of the following: upload [something] / download [something] / perform [something] / repeat if desired.*"⁴⁴ Or the work of David Horvitz, which lays bare the contradictions between the internet's promise of infinite space and instantaneous connectivity and the real-world limits of the human body in lived space-time.⁴⁵ The ways in which these contemporary practices—among many laudable others—continue the investigations begun by Fluxus artists more than fifty years ago is beyond the present discussion, but at the very least I want to propose that in today's world they urgently and effectively signal a taste for simplicity, immediacy, basic images, most directly, with a minimum of distractions. We should want to see it done.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book owes its existence to an intellectual network perhaps as far-flung as that cultivated by Fluxus artists, and I would like to acknowledge as many of its participants as possible. Mentors and interlocutors whose intellectual energy, keen insights, timely interventions, and sage advice have influenced this project over many years include Miwon Kwon, Liz Kotz, Hannah Higgins, Judith Rodenbeck, Suzanne Hudson, Julia Robinson, Roger Savage, Charlie Gere, Marcia Brennan, Steven Nelson, Saloni Mathur, Matthew Ritchie, and Yvonne Rainer. Marcia Reed, chief curator and associate director of the Getty Research Institute, shared her expert curatorial knowledge and connected me with numerous opportunities to work closely with Fluxus objects and ephemera. The scholarship and criticism of George Baker, my most discerning reader, remains an awesome inspiration, and I am deeply grateful for his engagement with my work and continued presence in my life. It has been an immense privilege to work with Susan Bielstein at the Uni-

versity of Chicago Press, and I am ever thankful for her dedication and patience, without which this book could not have been realized, as well as for the ongoing diligent support of assistant editor James Whitman Tofness. Also at the press, I extend my thanks to Adrienne Meyers, David Olsen, Isaac Tobin, and Caterina MacLean. Thanks as well to my manuscript editor, Marianne Tatom, and to my indefatigable indexer, Josh Rutner.

Close encounters with primary materials and personal narratives were made possible by Ursula Frohne during her tenure at the Universität zu Köln; Elke Gruhn, Nassauischer Kunstverein Wiesbaden; Ilona Lütken, Hanns Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart; Hannelore Kersting, Städtisches Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach; Anne Rodler, Museum Kunstpalast Düsseldorf; Susanne Neuburger, mumok, Vienna; María de Prada, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Jon Hendricks, Gretchen Wagner, Julia Pelta Feldman, Christian Rattemeyer, and Danielle Johnson, custodians of the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the expert staff of the Getty Research Institute Special Collections. In Germany, warm welcome and helpful leads were provided by Michael and Ute Berger, Michael Erloff, Wolfgang and Ute Feelisch, Wolfram Gabler, Horst Kloever, Thomas Klein, and Manfred Leve. In France, Marianne Filliou and Gerlof Lenten shared memories and laughs about Robert Filliou. Those who assisted my research by generously offering their wisdom and sharing treasured materials include: Billie Maciunas, Larry Miller, Sara Seagull, Christian Xatrec, Ben Vautier, Henry Martin, Barbro Patterson, Ad Petersen, Anne Tardos, Marc Leve, Lothar Schnepf, Barbara Moore, Peter Brötzmann, Manfred Montwé, Vera Spoerri, Reiko Sunami Kopelson, Barbara Räderscheidt, Eric Decelle, Glenn Phillips, Constance Glenn, Joan Rothfuss, Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, Martha Buskirk, Matthew Jesse Jackson, Valerie Hellstein, Kathleen Campagnolo, Jane McFadden, Alison de Lima Greene, Jon Evans, and Michelle White. Representatives from the following institutions lent their time providing images and permissions: Earle Brown Music Foundation, Paul Sacher Foundation, Edition Peters, John Cage Trust, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Ossorio Foundation, Tomas Schmit Archiv, Kunstmuseum Lichtenstein, Harvard Art Museums, Peter Freeman, Inc., Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, Gagolian Gallery, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Paula Cooper Gallery, and Marian Goodman Gallery.

I am particularly grateful to the scholars, curators, and editors who have provided opportunities to share my work on Fluxus, among them Alexa Sekyra, Gail Feigenbaum, Rebecca M. Brown, Eric Crosby, Liz Rae Heise-Glass, Rebecca Y. Kim, Eva Ehniger, Antje Krause-Wahl, Joseph Imorde, Katharina Rosenberger, Sarah Schultz, Angela Miller, Sabine Eckmann, Yongwoo Lee, Petra Lange-Berndt, Christopher Rountree, Kate Nordstrum, David Schafer, Michael Ned Holte, Jacquelynn Baas, Donna Gustafson, Anne Gunnison, Molleen Theodore,

Thomas Kirchner, and Ursula Frohne.

This project was made possible by fellowships and grants from the University of California Office of the President, J. William Fulbright Program, Getty Research Institute, Houston Arts Alliance, Terra Foundation, and the Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts and Division of Research at the University of Houston. Its completion was facilitated by a Getty/ACLS Postdoctoral Fellowship in the History of Art from the American Council of Learned Societies, generously funded by the Getty Foundation.

At the University of Houston, I am thankful for the supportive environment and good humor provided by colleagues Sandra Zalman, Rex Koontz, Roberto Tejada, Judith Steinhoff, Rodney Nevitt, Keliy Anderson-Staley, Anna Mayer, Jillian Conrad, David Politzer, Javier Sánchez Martínez, Andrea Johnson, Catherine Essinger, Danny Fuller, Beckham Dossett, and Andrew Davis. Tracy Sung, Heather Bisesti, and Tere Garcia provided crucial assistance with research and images in the book's final stages.

For their camaraderie, intellectual engagement, and kind favors at various points in the life of this project, I am thankful to Kavior Moon, Andrea Gyorody, Melody Rod-Ari, Ross Elfline, Christopher Tradowsky, Andy Campbell, Katie Anania, Gabe Ritter, Mika Yoshitake, Jenny Lin, Gloria Sutton, Doris Chon, Elena Shtromberg, Cassie Wu, Jamin An, Aandrea Stang, Naima Keith, Olivia Gunn, Iris Moon, John Tain, Juliane Wattig, Magdalena Nieslony, Katie Hornstein, Zanna Gilbert, Olivian Cha, Hannah Shaw, David Levitz, Owen Gump, Karl Haendel, Gabi Ferrer, Vincent Ramos, Miles Ake, Katie Herzog, Alison O'Daniel, Nancy Popp, Mark So, Adam Overton, Sarah Rara, Luke Fischbeck, Susan Siltan, Ragen Moss, Farrah Karapetian, Stephanie Taylor, Steve Roden, Sara Wookey, Alison D'Amato, David Horvitz, Matthias Merkel Hess, David Dove, Maria Chavez, Maudie and Sumul Shah, Zach Moser, and Katy Goodman. My text has benefited from ongoing dialogue and shared resources with fellow travelers in Fluxus Nicole L. Woods and Colby Chamberlain. Writing and editing were invigorated in the final stretch by friendly debates with Michael Gallope, Emily Capper, John Hicks, and Dorota Biczal. Special love and hugs to my marathon support team and eternal network: Elana Mann, Megan Metcalf, Kelly Kleinschrodt, and my brilliant writing partner Sarah-Neel Smith, who was with me through nearly every page.

Among the greatest gifts of working on Fluxus has been the opportunity to converse and correspond with the artists themselves, who have been profoundly generous with their time, archives, and memories: Benjamin Patterson, Alison Knowles, Milan Knížák, Takako Saito, Jonas Mekas, Daniel Spoerri, Willem de Ridder, Ken Friedman, and Larry Miller. I admire the energy and integrity with which they continue their respective practices, and I painfully miss those who have left this world.

I am most grateful to my family—my parents and sisters, the Harrens, Pow-

ells, Elberts, Bommaritos, and Stephenses—who have provided unceasing cheerleading, periodic celebration, and much-needed diversions over the course of this years-long endeavor. My two sons, both born alongside the creation of this book, provided the most intimate and extraordinary company, making certain theorizing possible. Greatest of all, thank you, Michael: your enduring faith, encouragement, and curiosity remain for me the wellsprings of life and love.

NOTES

PRELUDE

- 1 Petra Stegmann, ed., *“The lunatics are on the loose . . .”: European Fluxus Festivals 1962–1977* (Potsdam: Down With Art!, 2012).
- 2 George Maciunas, letter to Joseph Beuys, c. January 1963, reprinted in Emmett Williams, *My Life in Flux—And Vice Versa* (Stuttgart: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1991), 73.
- 3 Michael Nyman, “An Interview with George Brecht” (1976), in *An Introduction to George Brecht’s Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, by Henry Martin (Milan: Multhipla Edizioni, 1978), 108.
- 4 From at least June 1958, the start of his participation in John Cage’s experimental composition course, Brecht kept detailed notebooks of his ideas for artworks and performances. These notebooks continued well after he left the course in August 1959 and provide an extraordinarily detailed account of the development of his work. The connection between Brecht’s sketches for *Burette Music* and his event score *Drip Music* was first identified by Gabrielle Knapstein in Knapstein, *George Brecht: Events: Über die Event-Partituren von George Brecht aus den Jahren 1959–1963* (Berlin: Wiens-Verlag, 1999), 29.

- 5 George Maciunas, letter to Nam June Paik, c. 1962, Jean Brown papers, 1916–1995 (bulk 1958–1985), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, accession no. 890164.
- 6 George Maciunas, “Proposed Program for a Fluxfest in Prague,” 1966, Lawrence Alloway papers, 1935–2003, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, accession no. 2003.M.46.
- 7 Dick Higgins, “Exemplarist Manifesto” (1976), in *A Dialectic of Centuries: Notes Towards a Theory of the New Arts* (New York: Printed Editions, 1978), 156, 159, italics mine; reprinted in *Intermedia, Fluxus and the Something Else Press: Selected Writings by Dick Higgins*, ed. Steve Clay and Ken Friedman (Catskill, NY: Siglio, 2018).
- 8 John Cage taught composition at the New School from 1956 to 1959. Brecht’s classmates during the terms he attended included Stephen Addiss, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Scott Hyde, Allan Kaprow, Jackson Mac Low, Florence Tarlow, Jim Dine, Al Kouzel, Harvey Y. Gross, George Segal, and Larry Poons. See Bruce Altshuler, “The Cage Class,” in *FluxAttitudes*, ed. Cornelia Lauf and Susan Hapgood (Gent: Imschoot Uitgevers, 1991), 17–23; and Rebecca Y. Kim, “In No Uncertain Musical Terms: The Cultural Politics of John Cage’s Indeterminacy” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2008), 128–64.
- 9 George Brecht, “The Origin of Events” (1970), in *Happening & Fluxus*, ed. Hanns Sohm and Harald Szeemann (Köln: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1970), n.p. See also Julia Robinson, *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective* (Köln: Walther König, 2005); and Robinson, “The Brechtian Event Score: A Structure in Fluxus,” *Performance Research* 7, no. 3 (2002): 110–23.
- 10 Sometime in 1963 Brecht wrote in response to Maciunas, “I hadn’t thought of them [the event scores] as temporal readymades, but that description certainly fits.” George Brecht, letter to George Maciunas, c. 1963, Hanns Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
- 11 The origins of the event score may also be traced to the 1960–1961 work of La Monte Young. In contrast to the literal and figurative fluidity of Brecht’s *Drip Music*, however, Young’s compositions, such as the well-known *Composition 1960 #10 (to Bob Morris)* (“Draw a straight line and follow it”), eventually led to a practice engaged in the pursuit of experiences of transcendence and eternity through the imposition of static, all-encompassing perceptual conditions. For Young, who has vehemently dissociated his work from Fluxus, the group’s alliance with the vicissitudes of the everyday came to be seen as worthlessly banal: “It is to be noted regarding Fluxus vs. Stasis: Change, or flux is inevitable. Stasis, or remaining the same, is impossible. Therefore, to achieve the static state is the goal, while the state of flux, variation, or contrast, is unavoidable and thus unnecessary as a goal.” La Monte Young, “Why I Withdrew from Fluxus,” in *Fluxus Scores and Instructions: The Transformative Years*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Roskilde, Denmark: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008), 53. For a detailed overview of the early years of Young’s practice, see Henry Flynt, “La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62,” in *Sound and Light: La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela*, ed. William Duckworth and Richard Fleming (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1996), 44–97.
- 12 My description of *Water Yam* is based on a first-edition example containing seventy-three scores held in the Jean Brown papers. The box is cardboard and designed like a large, sliding matchbox. It is common, given the works’ assembly by multiple people in multiple locations over time, for there to be differences in the number of scores from one “copy” of *Water Yam* to the next. I deal with the vagaries of Fluxus editions in chapter 4.
- 13 George Brecht, “Statement for James Goldsworthy” (July 11, 1960), in *George Brecht—Notebooks*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun, vol. 5 (Köln: Walther König, 1998), 151.
- 14 George Brecht notebook no. 8, June 1961–September 1962, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 144.

- 15 George Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun, vol. 4 (Köln: Walther König, 1998), 109. Four of Brecht's patented designs appear in Robinson, *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective*, 190.
- 16 Antje von Graevenitz, "Sprache ergreift Materie—Das FESTUM FLUXORUM FLUXUS in Düsseldorf 1963," in *Fotos schreiben Kunstgeschichte*, ed. Renate Buschmann and Stephan von Wiese (Köln/Düsseldorf: DuMont/Museum Kunstpalast, 2007), 82.
- 17 In a letter to Robert Filliou, Marianne Filliou writes: "This afternoon, the mail arrived at the gallery with a marvelous letter from George's mother, who said she has a piece like his drip music—five flower pots different sizes that she washed with water from a hose, that dripped in different tones from her window sill." Brecht's handwriting interjects: "She's starting to understand what I'm about!!!" Marianne Filliou and George Brecht, letter to Robert Filliou, c. late fall 1966, Hanns Sohm Archive.
- 18 George Brecht, "Notes on shipping and exhibiting MEDICINE CABINET (ALTERNATIVE TITLES: MEDICINE CHEST, CABINET)," letter to the Museum of Modern Art, 1960, reprinted in Robinson, *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective*, 230.
- 19 André Breton, "Crise de l'objet," *Cahiers d'art* 1–2 (May 1936): 21–26.
- 20 The transcript of the event has been published as Lawrence Alloway, Marcel Duchamp, et al., "The Art of Assemblage: A Symposium" (1961), in *Essays on Assemblage*, Studies in Modern Art, vol. 2, ed. James Leggio and Helen M. Franc (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992). An audio recording of the symposium, which resides in the archives of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, can be found online via Clocktower.org: <http://clocktower.org/series/historic-audio-from-the-museum-of-modern-art>, accessed September 15, 2018.
- 21 William C. Seitz, *The Art of Assemblage* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 32–39. The most famous version of this argument is articulated by Peter Bürger in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
- 22 Alloway et al., "The Art of Assemblage: A Symposium," 147, italics mine.
- 23 La Monte Young, ed., *An Anthology of Chance Operations* (New York, 1963), n.p.
- 24 Jackson Mac Low describes his participation in *December 1952* and its importance to his practice in Mac Low, "How Maciunas Met the New York Avant Garde," in *Fluxus: Today and Yesterday*, ed. Johan Pijnappel, *Art & Design profile* 28 (London: Academy Editions, 1993), 43.
- 25 George Maciunas's text, given the German title "Neo-Dada in den Vereinigten Staaten," appears in English as "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art." See Maciunas, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art" (1962), in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss, exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993), 156–57; all my references to this essay by Maciunas refer to this version. For more on the "Kleines Sommerfest," see Jon Hendricks, "Fluxus: Kleines Sommerfest/Neo-Dada in der Musik/Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik/Festum Fluxorum Fluxus," in *Stationen der Moderne: Die bedeutenden Kunstausstellungen des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1988), 493–99; and Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, *Maciunas' Learning Machines: From Art History to a Chronology of Fluxus* (Berlin: Vice Versa Verlag, 2003), 15–16.
- 26 Maciunas, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art," 157, italics in orig.
- 27 Owen Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press, 1998), 1; Kristine Stiles, "Between Water and Stone: Fluxus and Performance; A Metaphysics of Acts," in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*; and Hannah Higgins, *Fluxus Experience* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

- 28 Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); and Julia Robinson, "From Abstraction to Model: George Brecht's Events and the Conceptual Turn in Art of the 1960s," *October* 127 (Winter 2009): 77–108.
- 29 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Robert Watts: Animate Objects, Inanimate Subjects," *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 531–53; Nicole L. Woods, "Object/Poems: Alison Knowles's Feminist Archite(x)ture," *X-TRA* 15, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 6–25; David Joselit, "The Readymade Metabolized: Fluxus in Life," *RES* 63/64 (Spring/Autumn 2013): 190–200; Colby Chamberlain, "Design in Flux," *Art in America* (October 2014): 118–23; and Mari Dumett, *Corporate Imaginations: Fluxus Strategies for Living* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2017).
- 30 Blake Gopnik, "Yoko Ono and MoMA, Together at Last," *New York Times*, May 6, 2015, at <https://nyti.ms/2uGWLkw>, as of January 27, 2018.
- 31 I address a fascinating case study of the problems raised when Fluxus objects enter museological space in Harren, "The Provisional Work of Art: George Brecht's Footnotes at LACMA, 1969," *Getty Research Journal* 8 (2016): 177–97.
- 32 Judith Rodenbeck has associated the shift from formalism to process in 1960s art with the figure of the "black box," whose mute exteriority masks dramatic internal complexity. Fluxus is among many neo-avant-garde and intermedia practices that, according to Rodenbeck, have "fallen outside the mainstream of critical discourse largely because, given their explicit or implicit engagement with temporality itself, they could not be recuperated in formal terms. Despite the unyielding external formalism of the (happener/black box) structure itself, this new discursive system and its operations would yield results that would challenge and eventually displace the very terminology of the formalism that produced them." Rodenbeck, "The Black Box," in *Radical Prototypes: Allan Kaprow and the Invention of Happenings* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 78.
- 33 In this way, the present book aims to contribute to reconsiderations of the relationship between pre-World War II and postwar art and artists, or between modern and post-modern or contemporary art, as one of intergenerational feedback and exchange rather than monodirectional transmission. Model studies important to this ongoing project include Catherine Craft, *An Audience of Artists: Dada, Neo-Dada, and the Emergence of Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Eva Díaz, *The Experimenters: Chance and Design at Black Mountain College* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Elise Archias, *The Concrete Body: Yvonne Rainer, Carolee Schneemann, Vito Acconci* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016); and Irene V. Small, *Hélio Oiticica: Folding the Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
- 34 See Rosalind Krauss's two volumes, "A Voyage On the North Sea": *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000) and *Under Blue Cup* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011). Pamela M. Lee relates recursive forms in art to the broader cultural context of the 1960s in *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 59–62.
- 35 After Hal Foster's essay, "The Crux of Minimalism" (in *The Return of the Real: Art and Theory at the End of the Century* [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996], 34–69), I have offered a counter-history of this "crux" moment centered on Fluxus, giving special attention to Dick Higgins's notion of intermedia. See Harren, "The Crux of Fluxus: Intermedia, Rear-Guard," in *Arts Expanded (1958–1978)*, ed. Eric Crosby and Liz Glass, vol. 1 of *Living Collections Catalogue* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2014), <https://walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/crux-of-fluxus/>, accessed January 6, 2018.
- 36 See Martha Buskirk, "Authorship and Authority," in *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Miwon Kwon, "Unhinging of Site Specific-

ity,” in *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Maria Eichhorn, *The Artist’s Contract* (Köln: Walther König, 2009); James Meyer, “The Minimal Unconscious,” *October* 130 (Fall 2009): 141–76; and Susan Hapgood and Cornelia Lauf, eds., *In Deed: Certificates of Authenticity in Art* (Amsterdam: Roma, 2011). I address the divergent logic of scores versus contracts in Harren, “The Provisional Work of Art: George Brecht’s Footnotes at LACMA, 1969.”

- 37 I borrow this evocative term from Alan Tormey, “Indeterminacy and Identity in Art,” *The Monist* 58, no. 2 (1974): 207.
- 38 Gerhard Richter in conversation with Coosje van Bruggen (1985), cited in Susanne Küper, “Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter: ‘Leben mit Pop—Eine Demonstration für den Kapitalistischen Realismus,’” *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 53 (1992): 299, translation mine.
- 39 Buchloh, “Robert Watts: Animate Objects—Inanimate Subjects,” 551.
- 40 George Maciunas, “Fluxus Art-Amusement” (1965), reproduced in *Fluxus Etc.*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Bloomfield Hills, MI: Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, 1981), 9.
- 41 Andreas Huyssen, “Back to the Future: Fluxus in Context,” in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, 142.
- 42 Festival of Misfits announcement, October 1962, cited in Williams, *My Life in Flux—and Vice Versa*, 62–63.
- 43 Fredric Jameson has argued that postmodernism was marked by the onset of a concern with space that eclipsed modernist thinkers’ concern with time. This was arguably the case from the perspective of experimental music; however, from the perspective of art history, it could be argued rather that the shift from modernism to postmodernism was marked by the increasing perception of the art object as a *temporal* experience. Jameson, “The End of Temporality,” *Critical Inquiry* 29, no. 4 (Summer 2003): 695–718. See also Lee, *Chronophobia*.

CHAPTER ONE

- 1 Andreas Huyssen, “Back to the Future: Fluxus in Context,” in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss, exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993), 146.
- 2 See, for example, Steven Johnson, ed., *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Amy C. Beal, “‘Time Canvasses’: Morton Feldman and the Painters of the New York School,” in *Music and Modern Art*, ed. James Leggio (New York: Routledge, 2002); and the scholarship on Morton Feldman, Earle Brown, and John Cage cited throughout this chapter.
- 3 Branden Joseph, *Random Order: Robert Rauschenberg and the Neo-Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Branden Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage* (New York: Zone, 2011); Julia Robinson, ed., *John Cage, October Files* 12 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011); Julia Robinson, ed., *The Anarchy of Silence: John Cage and Experimental Art* (Barcelona: Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2009); as well as Theresa Sauer, *Notations* 21 (New York: Mark Batty Publisher, 2009), and Alex Waterman et al., *Between Thought and Sound: Graphic Notation in Contemporary Music* (New York: The Kitchen, 2008).
- 4 As Rebecca Y. Kim has argued, resurrecting Thomson’s helpful term “pressure group” may correct the inaccurate stereotype of the New York School being a group led by John Cage. See Virgil Thomson, “The Abstract Composers,” *New York Herald-Tribune*, Febru-

- ary 5, 1952, reprinted in *Writings About John Cage*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), as well as Kim, “In No Uncertain Musical Terms: The Cultural Politics of John Cage’s Indeterminacy” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2008), 79–81.
- 5 For a detailed analysis of how certain graphic notations were realized by David Tudor, see John Holzaepfel, “David Tudor and the Performance of American Experimental Music, 1950–1959” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1994).
- 6 Lydia Goehr, “Being True to the Work,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 55.
- 7 Mark Evan Bonds, *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1.
- 8 Bonds, *Absolute Music*, 297.
- 9 Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 12.
- 10 Peter Gradenwitz, “The Performer’s Role in the Newest Music,” *The Chesterian* 34 (1959): 61.
- 11 Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 128.
- 12 Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 186.
- 13 John Cage, “45’ for a Speaker” (1954), in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 165, italics in orig.
- 14 John Cage, *Sound on Paper: Musical Notations in Japan* (New York: Japan House Gallery, 1981), 6–8.
- 15 Thomas Forrest Kelly, *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2015), 12.
- 16 John Cage, “The Future of Music: Credo” (1937), in *Silence*, 4.
- 17 Cage, “The Future of Music: Credo,” 3. See also Liz Kotz, “Proliferating Scores and the Autonomy of Writing,” in *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 13–57; and Alex Ross, “Infernal Machines: How Recordings Changed Music,” in *Listen to This* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 55–68.
- 18 See, for example, Glenn Gould, “The Prospects of Recording,” *High Fidelity* 16, no. 4 (April 1966): 46–63.
- 19 Richard Maxfield, “Composers, Performance and Publication” and “Music, Electronic and Performed,” in *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, ed. La Monte Young (New York, 1963), n.p.
- 20 John Cage, “Where Are We Going? and What Are We Doing?” (1961), in *Silence*, 194. This notion is borrowed from Ananda K. Coomaraswamy’s text *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (New York: Dover, 1956). The ideological implications of Cage’s turn to indeterminacy have been theorized variously—as desubjectivizing, anarchic, and/or queer—by Caroline A. Jones, Branden Joseph, Rebecca Y. Kim, and Julia Robinson. See Jones, “Finishing School: John Cage and the Abstract Expressionist Ego,” *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Summer 1993): 628–65; Joseph, “Chance, Indeterminacy, Multiplicity,” in *The Anarchy of Silence: John Cage and Experimental Art*, ed. Robinson, 210–38; and Kim, “The Formalization of Indeterminacy in 1958: John Cage and Experimental Composition at the New School,” and Robinson, “John Cage and Investiture: Unmanning the System,” both in *John Cage*, October Files 12, ed. Robinson.

- 21 John Cage, "Experimental Music" (1957), in *Silence*, 9.
- 22 Cage, "Experimental Music," 9.
- 23 See, for example, Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).
- 24 Karlheinz Stockhausen, "Music in Space," trans. Ruth Koenig, in *Die Reihe* 5 (Bryn Mawr, PA: T. Presser in association with Universal Edition, 1961), 70; originally published as "Musik im Raum" in *Die Reihe* 5 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1959).
- 25 Olson's text was first published in the journal *Poetry New York* in 1950 but received wider reception with its reprinting in Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry, 1945–1960* (New York: Grove Press, 1960). The text was embraced by, among others, William Carlos Williams, who added portions of it to his revised autobiography in 1951. See also Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 196.
- 26 Morton Feldman, "Liner Notes" (1962), in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*, ed. B. H. Friedman (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 2000), 6.
- 27 John Cage, "Experimental Music: Doctrine" (1955), in *Silence*, 13. For another take on graphic notation's avoidance of "aural symbolism," see Frank O'Hara, "New Directions in Music: Morton Feldman," liner notes, *New Directions in Music 2*, Columbia Records ML5403/MS6090 (1959).
- 28 At The Club, Cage presented his "Lecture on Nothing" in August 1950 and his "Lecture on Something" in February 1951; both are reprinted in Cage, *Silence*. Feldman's lecture, "The Unframed Frame," given in February 1951, remains unpublished. See Valerie Hellstein, "The Cage-iness of Abstract Expressionism," *American Art* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 56–77; and Brett Boutwell, "Morton Feldman's Graphic Notation: Projections and Trajectories," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 6, no. 4 (2012): 474.
- 29 John Cage, Michael Kirby, and Richard Schechner, "An Interview with John Cage," *The Drama Review: TDR* 10, no. 2 (1965): 67.
- 30 George Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun, vol. 1 (Köln: Walther König, 1991), 4.
- 31 Dick Higgins, "On Cage's Classes," in *John Cage*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Praeger, 1970), 122.
- 32 "Cage's Studio-Home," in *John Cage*, ed. Kostelanetz, 84–85; and Sebastian Claren, "A Feldman Chronology," trans. Christine Shuttleworth, in *Morton Feldman Says: Selected Interviews and Lectures 1964–1987*, ed. Chris Villars (London: Hyphen Press, 2006), 255–75.
- 33 John Cage, *I–VI* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 238–40.
- 34 Kurt Stone, *Music Notation in the Twentieth Century: A Practical Guidebook* (New York: Norton, 1980), 152–54.
- 35 Morton Feldman and La Monte Young, "A Conversation on Composition and Improvisation (Bunita Marcus, Francesco Pellizzi, Marian Zazeela)," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 13 (Spring 1987): 159; and John Cage, "Composition as Process: II. Indeterminacy" (1958), in *Silence*, 36. Cage's language is in fact borrowed from Feldman; see Feldman's statement in "Four Musicians at Work," *Transformation: Arts, Communication, Environment* 1, no. 3 (1952), reprinted in Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *The Boulez–Cage Correspondence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 104.

- 36 Brian O’Doherty, “Feldman Throws a Switch Between Sight and Sound,” *New York Times*, February 2, 1964, X11.
- 37 Morton Feldman, cited in Beal, “‘Time Canvasses’: Morton Feldman and the Painters of the New York School,” 236. On Feldman’s process of composing with graphs, see also Feldman, “Crippled Symmetry” (1981), in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*; and David Patterson, “Cage and Beyond: An Annotated Interview with Christian Wolff,” *Perspectives of New Music* 32, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 72.
- 38 Alistair Noble, *Composing Ambiguity: The Early Music of Morton Feldman* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 3–4.
- 39 Morton Feldman, “Out of ‘Last Pieces’” (1964), quoted in David Cline, *The Graph Music of Morton Feldman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 105.
- 40 Boutwell, “Morton Feldman’s Graphic Notation: *Projections* and Trajectories,” 466.
- 41 Stefan Wolpe, “Thinking Twice,” in *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, ed. Elliott Schwartz and Barney Childs (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston), 274–307; and Wolpe, “On Proportions” (1960), trans. Matthew Greenbaum, *Perspectives of New Music* 34, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 174.
- 42 Stefan Wolpe, “Thoughts on Pitch and Some Considerations Connected with It” (1952), ed. Austin Clarkson, *Perspectives of New Music* 17, no. 2 (Spring–Summer 1979): n.p.
- 43 Feldman, “Crippled Symmetry,” 145.
- 44 Earle Brown, “Prefatory Note,” *Folio and 4 Systems* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1961), n.p.
- 45 Brown, “Prefatory Note.”
- 46 Earle Brown, “On *December 1952*,” *American Music* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 4.
- 47 Earle Brown, letter to Peter Yates, January 2, 1961, Mandeville Library, University of California, San Diego; see also Louis Pine, “Conversation with Earle Brown about Constructivism and Schillinger’s System of Musical Composition,” *Contemporary Music Review* 30, no. 2 (2011): 167–78.
- 48 John Evarts, “The New Musical Notation: A Graphic Art?,” *Leonardo* 1, no. 4 (1968): 405–12.
- 49 Earle Brown, “Form in New Music,” in *Source: Music of the Avant-Garde*, ed. Larry Austin and Douglas Kahn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 24. Brown’s essay first appeared in a 1965 issue of the *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik* dedicated to the very topic of “Form in der Neuen Musik”; see *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik* 10 (1965): 57–69.
- 50 El Lissitzky, “Proun,” trans. John E. Bowlit, in *El Lissitzky* (Köln: Galerie Gmurzynska, 1976), 65.
- 51 Lissitzky, “Proun,” 66.
- 52 James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 62.
- 53 Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 40–45. Stephen Drury’s “A John Cage Dictionary” defines a gamut as “the total fixed collection of single notes, intervals, chords and aggregates which constitute the material of a composition. Selection from the elements of the gamut to create melodies, harmonies, or passagework can be made by the composer or the performer.” “A John Cage Dictionary,” DRAM, <https://www.dramonline.org/albums/john-cage-edition-vol-23-the-works-for-violin-4/notes>, accessed December 5, 2018.

- 54 John Cage, letter to Pierre Boulez, May 1951, in Nattiez, *The Boulez–Cage Correspondence*, 90.
- 55 *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, trans. Richard Wilhelm with Cary F. Baynes, foreword by C. G. Jung (New York: Pantheon Books, 1950).
- 56 Cline, *The Graph Music of Morton Feldman*, 23, 36–37.
- 57 Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 92.
- 58 John Cage, *For the Birds: John Cage in Conversation with Daniel Charles* (Boston: Marion Boyers, 1981), 44.
- 59 Pierre Boulez, “Sonate, que me veux-tu?” (1960), in *Orientations: Collected Writings*, ed. Jean Jacques-Nattiez, trans. Martin Cooper (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 143–54.
- 60 Rosalind Krauss, “Grids,” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 22.
- 61 Krauss, “Grids,” 9. I am not the first to read graphic notation in terms of Krauss’s theory of the grid. Musicologist Rebecca Y. Kim has provided a pathbreaking theoretical analysis of the ethical dimensions of indeterminacy’s intervention into the discipline of music. My engagement with Krauss differs significantly, however, in that I am tracing for art history a theory of form that passes from the New York School composers to the visual arts. See Kim, “A Staircase to the Universal and the Precipice of Life: Grids, the Human Variable, and Ethical Action,” in Kim, “In No Uncertain Musical Terms,” 75–127.
- 62 Krauss, “Grids,” 9.
- 63 Krauss, “Grids,” 9.
- 64 “score, n.” OED Online, December 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/173033?rskey=161Pn&result=1>, accessed December 5, 2018.
- 65 Feldman, “Liner Notes,” in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*, 5.
- 66 Feldman, “Liner Notes,” 5–6.
- 67 Morton Feldman, “Between Categories” (1969), in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*, 88.
- 68 Brown, “On December 1952,” 2. The alignment of musical composition with the practice of drawing was not limited to the New York School. Karlheinz Stockhausen has referred to his *Klavierstücke*, although not overtly graphic in nature, as “my drawings.” Karlheinz Stockhausen, liner notes to Aloys Konstarky (piano), *Stockhausen: Klavierstücke I–XI*, recorded July 1965, CBS, 77209.
- 69 Feldman and Young, “A Conversation on Composition and Improvisation,” 155.
- 70 Bernice Rose, *Drawing Now* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976).
- 71 Pierre Boulez, letter to John Cage, December 1951, reprinted in Nattiez, *The Boulez–Cage Correspondence*, 116, italics in orig.
- 72 See Pierre Boulez, Morton Feldman, John Cage, and Christian Wolff, “Four Musicians at Work,” *Transformation* 1, no. 3 (1952).
- 73 Peter Gradenwitz, who reported from that year’s IFNM, gave this précis of Nono’s critique: “Indecision, escapism and false naïveté all characterise such composers that for lack of courage and direction leave the final act of composition to the virtuoso who will make their work successful even where they have failed themselves.” Gradenwitz, “The Performer’s Role in the Newest Music,” 63. Nono’s lecture was published in the 1960 *Darmstädter Beiträge* under the title “Geschichte und Gegenwart in der Musik von heute” (Past and present in the music of today). Other important published contributions to the debate include Cornelius Cardew, “Notation—Interpretation, etc.,” *Tempo*

- 58 (Summer 1961): 21–33; and Roman Haubenstock-Ramati and Katharine M. Freeman, “Notation—Material and Form,” *Perspectives of New Music* 4, no. 1 (Autumn–Winter 1965): 39–44.
- 74 Karlheinz Stockhausen, “Musik und Graphik” (July 1959), in Stockhausen, *Texte zur elektronischen und instrumentalen Musik* (Köln: DuMont, 1963), 177; originally published in the *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik* 3 (1960). See also David Gutkin, “Drastic or Plastic? Threads from Karlheinz Stockhausen’s ‘Musik und Graphik,’ 1959,” *Perspectives of New Music* 50, no. 1–2 (Winter/Summer 2012): 255–305.
- 75 John Cage, prefatory note, *Concert for Piano and Orchestra, Solo For Piano* (1957–1958) (New York: Henmar Press, 1960).
- 76 Dore Ashton, “Art Review: Cage, Composer, Shows Calligraphy of Note,” *New York Times*, May 6, 1958.
- 77 Alvin Lucier, “Performer as Subject,” panel discussion, University of California, San Diego, CA, November 19, 2011.
- 78 Cited in Kenneth Silverman, *Begin Again: A Biography of John Cage* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 303.
- 79 This was Brecht’s *Three Chair Events* (composed April 1961), included in the exhibition *Environments, Situations, Spaces* at Martha Jackson Gallery in May–June 1961. See Julia Robinson, “From Abstraction to Model: George Brecht’s Events and the Conceptual Turn in Art of the 1960s,” *October* 127 (Winter 2009): 93.
- 80 Maria Müller, “‘It Is a Long, Long Road’: John Cage and Galka Scheyer,” in *The Blue Four: Feininger, Jawlensky, Kandinsky, and Klee in the New World*, ed. Vivian Endicott Barnett and Josef Helfenstein (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
- 81 Wassily Kandinsky, *Point and Line to Plane*, trans. Howard Dearstyne and Hilla Rebay (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1947), 25.
- 82 Kandinsky, *Point and Line to Plane*, 28.
- 83 Kandinsky, *Point and Line to Plane*, 28, 32.
- 84 Kandinsky, *Point and Line to Plane*, 40.
- 85 John Cage, “On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and His Work” (1961), in *Silence*, 99, italics in orig.; and John Cage, *I–VI*, 26.
- 86 Catherine de Zegher, “A Century Under the Sign of Line: Drawing and Its Extension (1910–2010),” in *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century*, ed. Cornelia H. Butler and Catherine de Zegher (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010), 23, italics in orig.
- 87 Cage, “Composition as Process: II. Indeterminacy,” in *Silence*, 38.
- 88 Theodor W. Adorno, “Vers une musique informelle,” in *Quasi una fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Verso, 1992), 298–99, 301.
- 89 Karlheinz Stockhausen, cited in Francis Burt, “An Antithesis: The Aesthetic Aspect,” *The Score* 19 (March 1957): 69.
- 90 Sybille Krämer, “‘Epistemology of the Line’: Reflections on the Diagrammatical Mind,” in *Studies in Diagrammatology and Diagram Praxis*, ed. Olga Pombo and Alexander Gerner (London: College Publications, 2010), 13–39.
- 91 See, for example, the following: Molly Nesbit, “The Language of Industry,” in *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Thierry de Duve (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1991); David Joselit, “Dada’s Diagrams,” in *The Dada Seminars*, ed. Leah Dickerman and Matthew S. Witkovsky (Washington, DC: National

Gallery of Art, 2005); George Baker, "The Cinema Model," in *Robert Smithson: Spiral Jetty*, ed. Lynne Cook and Karen Kelly (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005); Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram," in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, ed. Catherine de Zegher (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Natilee Harren, "The Diagram Dematerialized, from Marcel Duchamp to John Cage to George Brecht," *Athanos* 26 (2008): 99–105; Susanne Leeb, ed., *Materialität der Diagramme: Kunst und Theorie* (Berlin: b_books, 2012); Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Painting as Diagram: Five Notes on Frank Stella's Early Paintings, 1958–1959," *October* 143 (Winter 2013): 126–44; Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Anti-humanist Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Margaret Iversen, "Desire and the Diagrammatic," *Oxford Art Journal* 39, no. 1 (2016): 1–17; and Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, *Die Kunst der Diagrammatik: Perspektiven eines neuen bildwissenschaftlichen Paradigmas* (Bielefeld: transcript-Verlag, 2017).

- 92 Joselit, "Dada's Diagrams," 232, 234.
- 93 George Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 50–55.
- 94 Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, 5.
- 95 Frederik Stjernfelt, *Diagrammatology: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Phenomenology, Ontology, and Semiotics* (New York: Springer, 2011). Notably, Stjernfelt acknowledges an early yet under-theorized use of the term "diagrammatology" by W. J. T. Mitchell in Mitchell's 1981 essay "Diagrammatology," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1981): 622–33. See Stjernfelt, *Diagrammatology*, 425n3.
- 96 Peirce, cited in Stjernfelt, *Diagrammatology*, 96. Stjernfelt engages mainly Peirce's 1906 paper "PAP (Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmatism)," reprinted in Peirce, *New Elements of Mathematics* 4, ed. C. Eisele (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1976).
- 97 Peirce, cited in Stjernfelt, *Diagrammatology*, 91.
- 98 Stjernfelt, *Diagrammatology*, 99.
- 99 Stjernfelt, *Diagrammatology*, 98.
- 100 Krämer, "Epistemology of the Line," 20.
- 101 Joselit, "Dada's Diagrams," 236.
- 102 Thomson, "The Abstract Composers," 74.
- 103 Daniel Charles, "Figuration and Prefiguration: Notes on Some New Graphic Notations" (1991), trans. Susan Park, in *Writings about John Cage*, ed. Kostelanetz, 250.
- 104 Charles, "Figuration and Prefiguration," 250.
- 105 Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15n6, italics in orig.
- 106 Brown, "Prefatory Note," *Folio and 4 Systems*, n.p.
- 107 Brown, "On December 1952," 3.
- 108 Brown, "On December 1952," 3.
- 109 Readers may wonder why I have chosen not to engage Umberto Eco's notion of the "open work." It is because the publication of his theorizations, while apt, came in the wake of Fluxus experiments and was not to my knowledge received by Fluxus artists in its time. First appearing in Italian in 1962, Eco's *Opera Aperta: forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee* was not translated into English until 1989.

- 110 Cornelius Cardew's Scratch Orchestra adopted this principle in the late 1960s as the fundament of a performance practice in which any graphic material could be adopted as a form of found notation. However, by 1976 Cardew had rejected graphic notation altogether as, in his mind, a false avant-garde serving the fancies of the musical bourgeoisie. Cardew, "Wiggly Lines and Wobbly Music," *Studio International* 192, no. 984 (November/December 1976): 249–55. See also Michael Parsons, "The Scratch Orchestra and Visual Arts," *Leonardo Music Journal* 11, Not Necessarily "English Music": Britain's Second Golden Age (2001): 5–11.
- 111 I pursue the material implications of this expanded field of notation in Harren, "The Provisional Work of Art: George Brecht's Footnotes at LACMA, 1969," *Getty Research Journal* 8 (2016): 177–97.
- 112 Earle Brown, "The Notation and Performance of New Music," 193, italics in orig.
- 113 Brown, "Form in New Music," 29.
- 114 Earle Brown, quoted in Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (London: Studio Vista, 1974), 58, italics in orig.
- 115 Cage, "Composition as Process: II. Indeterminacy," in *Silence*, 35.
- 116 Benjamin Piekut, "When Orchestras Attack! John Cage Meets the New York Philharmonic," in *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011).
- 117 Brown, "On December 1952," 6–7.
- 118 John Cage, performance note for *Variations I* (January 1958) (New York: Henmar Press, 1960), n.p.
- 119 Cage, performance note for *Variations I*, n.p.
- 120 Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 135–36.
- 121 John Cage, *John Cage, Writer: Selected Texts*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Limestone Editions, 1993), 105.
- 122 John Cage, letter to Peter Yates, May 19, 1959, Peter Yates papers, Mandeville Library, University of California, San Diego.
- 123 These words appear in the first lines of the chapter "Closed and Open Form" in Heinrich Wölfflin, *The Principles of Art History* (New York: Dover, 1950), 124.
- 124 Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 128.
- 125 Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 189.
- 126 Charles, "Figuration and Prefiguration," 256.
- 127 C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Saunders Peirce* 4, ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 423.
- 128 While Goodman relegates the language of type and token to a footnote (*Languages of Art*, 131n3), Richard Wollheim takes it up in his book *Art and Its Objects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968). A more nuanced account of the musical work's identity has since been offered by Roman Ingarden, for whom the work is a "mental construct" whose score is not definitive but simply a useful vehicle for making performance possible. Roman Ingarden, *The Work of Music and the Problem of Its Identity*, trans. Adam Czerniawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). For a critical overview of the major philosophical positions regarding the ontology and identity of the musical work, see Goehr, "Being True to the Work."

- 129 Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 113–14.
- 130 Feldman, “Predeterminate/Indeterminate” (1965), in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*, 35; this essay originally appeared in *Composer* 19 (Spring 1966): 3–4.
- 131 Kim, “In No Uncertain Musical Terms,” 153–54; see also Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 1, 11, 17, 63.
- 132 Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 1, 63.
- 133 Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 1, 65.
- 134 Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 1, 67.
- 135 Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 1, 67, italics mine.
- 136 Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 1, 69.
- 137 Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 1, 65.
- 138 Cage, “Composition as Process: II. Indeterminacy,” in *Silence*, 38.
- 139 Morton Feldman et al., “Morton Feldman, Earle Brown and Heinz-Klaus Metzger in Discussion,” *Music Before Revolution* (EMI Electrola, 1C 16528954/957, 1972).
- 140 George Brecht, “Chance-Imagery,” *A Great Bear Pamphlet* (New York: Something Else Press, 1966), 11–12. The text first appeared in *Collage*, no. 3–4, Palermo (December 1964). It has been republished in a digital edition by UbuWeb in 2004 at ubu.com and in a facsimile edition by Primary Information, New York, in 2007.
- 141 Brecht, “Chance-Imagery,” 7.
- 142 Brecht, “Chance-Imagery,” 11–12.
- 143 Brecht, “Chance-Imagery,” 23, italics mine.
- 144 Brecht, “Chance-Imagery,” 23.
- 145 Brecht, “Chance-Imagery,” 24.
- 146 George Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun, vol. 2 (Köln: Walther König, 1991), 101.
- 147 Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 2, 23.
- 148 This entry is dated October 26, 1958. Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 2, 35.
- 149 Brecht’s use of the term “significant form” in “Chance-Imagery” (p. 24) follows from the early twentieth-century formalism of critics like Clive Bell; see Bell, “The Aesthetic Hypothesis,” *Art* (New York: Stokes, 1913).
- 150 Michael Nyman, “An Interview with George Brecht” (1976), in *An Introduction to George Brecht’s Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, by Henry Martin (Milan: Multhipla Edizioni, 1978), 110.
- 151 Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, 95.
- 152 David Cole, “The Visual Script: Theory and Techniques,” *The Drama Review: TDR* 20, no. 4, Theatrical Theory Issue (December 1976), 28.
- 153 Randolph Coleman, review of works by Heinz Holliger, *Notes* 46, no. 4 (June 1990): 1069, cited in Taruskin, “The Modern Sound of Early Music” (1990), in *Text and Act*, 170.
- 154 Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*.
- 155 See Natilee Harren, “The Crux of Fluxus: Intermedia, Rear-Guard,” in *Arts Expanded (1958–1978)*, ed. Eric Crosby and Liz Glass, vol. 1 of *Living Collections Catalogue* (Minne-

apolis: Walker Art Center, 2014), accessed January 6, 2018, <https://walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/crux-of-fluxus/>.

- 156 John Cage and Alison Knowles, eds., *Notations* (New York: Something Else Press, 1969).
- 157 This debate can be traced through a number of works by W. J. T. Mitchell, including *Iconology: Images, Text, Ideology* (University of Chicago Press, 1986) and “The Pictorial Turn,” *Artforum* (March 1992): 89–94, as well as through critiques of “semiotic idealism” such as Dieter Freundlieb, “Semiotic Idealism,” *Poetics Today* 9, no. 4 (1988): 807–41.
- 158 Subtending my argument is the recognition that spatial mappings have always played a central role in structuralist theory, even in regard to the operations of language. One need only think of the crystalline diagrams of relation employed by figures from Lévi-Strauss to Lacan, or Rosalind Krauss’s turns and returns to the Klein group. This manner of spatial thinking tends to be suppressed when our model of a structuralist hermeneutics comes mainly from the linguistic structuralism of Ferdinand de Saussure, which describes meaning as arising out of binary systems of difference. Correspondingly, art-historical accounts that follow this model tend to fully identify the artwork with its appearance as text. Hubert Damisch’s understanding of structuralism serves as a good reminder: “For me structuralism is not to be found in a binary model but in the Lévi-Straussian model, which is three-dimensional. It’s the model from the *Elementary Structure of Kinship* in which the relationships cannot be thought in two dimensions. In working on this book Lévi-Strauss constructed little cardboard models that are still in his study through which he thought about kinship relationships—about how women circulated, for example. You can’t map this two-dimensionally, you need three coordinates. You can’t think it without a coordinate that is the equivalent of time.” Hubert Damisch, “A Conversation with Hubert Damisch,” Yve-Alain Bois, Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Hubert Damisch, *October* 85 (Summer 1998): 7.
- 159 Joselit, “Dada’s Diagrams,” 238.
- 160 Joselit, “Dada’s Diagrams,” 237.

CHAPTER TWO

- 1 Although this chapter begins with an epigraph by Alison Knowles, I have chosen not to examine her paintings here for several reasons. Knowles produced paintings under the influence of abstract expressionism as a student of Adolf Gottlieb at Pratt Institute in the 1950s, but abandoned and then deliberately destroyed this work once she entered the social circle of intermedia artists Dorothy Podber, Ray Johnson, and Dick Higgins, whom she married in 1960. The early painterly works of Knowles that remain are compositions of readymade imagery traced onto canvas by way of a light projector or printed from used silkscreens gathered by the artist from her day job at an advertising studio. The paintings’ proto-Pop, mediated process and aesthetic situates them outside this chapter’s focus on gesture painting and the errant drip. See oral history interview with Alison Knowles, June 1–2, 2010, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. I thank Nicole Woods for sharing her knowledge of Knowles’s early career with me.
- 2 George Brecht, letter, 1969, private collection, cited in Simon Anderson, “Living in Multiple Dimensions: George Brecht and Robert Watts, 1953–1963,” in *Off Limits: Rutgers University and the Avant-Garde, 1957–1963*, ed. Joan Marter (Newark, NJ: Rutgers University and Newark Museum, 1999), 111–12.
- 3 Dorothy Sieberling, “Art: The Wild Ones,” *Time*, February 20, 1956, 73; Allan Kaprow, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock” (1958), in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 2; and recording of Ivan Karp on

- Andy Warhol: uh yes uh no*, audio CD 10072–8 (New York: Sooj Records, 1996), cited in Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 280.
- 4 Rosalind Krauss, “The Crisis of the Easel Picture” (1999), in *Reading Abstract Expressionism: Context and Critique*, ed. Ellen G. Landau (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 649, italics in orig.
 - 5 Pathbreaking yet unexhaustive exceptions can be found in Kahn, *Noise Water Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*, 242–89; and Julia Robinson, “Pollock’s Concreteness: Painterly Performance or Performative Painting?,” in *Explosion! Painting as Action*, by Magnus af Petersens (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 2012), 157–74.
 - 6 George Brecht, “Chance-Imagery,” A Great Bear Pamphlet (New York: Something Else Press, 1966), 6–7. The text first appeared in *Collage*, no. 3–4, Palermo (December 1964). It has been republished in a digital edition by UbuWeb in 2004 at ubu.com and in a facsimile edition by Primary Information, New York, in 2007.
 - 7 Brecht, letter, 1969, private collection, cited in Anderson, “Living in Multiple Dimensions: George Brecht and Robert Watts, 1953–1963,” 111.
 - 8 George Brecht, notebook c. 1955 (no longer extant), cited in Julia Robinson, “Biographical Chronology,” *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective* (Köln: Walther König, 2005), 306.
 - 9 Michael Nyman, “An Interview with George Brecht” (1976), in *An Introduction to George Brecht’s Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, by Henry Martin (Milan: Multhipla Edizioni, 1978), 114.
 - 10 Robinson, “Biographical Chronology,” *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective*, 306.
 - 11 George Brecht, artist statement, exhibition announcement for *Don Bloom/George Brecht*, Old Mill Gallery, Tinton Falls, NJ, March 8–April 11, 1956, reproduced in Robinson, *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective*, 222, italics mine.
 - 12 Jackson Pollock, “My Painting,” *Possibilities 1* (Winter 1947–1948): 79.
 - 13 Robert Motherwell and Harold Rosenberg, editors’ statement, *Possibilities 1* (Winter 1947–1948): 1.
 - 14 George Brecht, letter to Jill Johnston, c. 1963, Jean Brown papers, 1916–1995 (bulk 1958–1985), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, accession no. 890164.
 - 15 Nyman, “An Interview with George Brecht,” 106.
 - 16 Manuel De Landa, “Deleuze, Diagrams, and the Genesis of Form,” *ANY: Architecture New York* 23, Diagram Work: Data Mechanics for a Topological Age (June 1998): 30–31. De Landa’s explication of Deleuze’s diagram is centered on Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); and Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Michael Hardt characterizes Deleuze’s philosophy as a “materialist ontology” in *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* (London: UCL Press, 1993), xiii.
 - 17 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 141, italics in orig.
 - 18 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 141.
 - 19 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 141, italics mine.
 - 20 De Landa, “Deleuze, Diagrams, and the Genesis of Form,” 30. I omit Félix Guattari’s name from the rest of my discussion with the understanding that the authors’ notion of

the diagram is owed mainly to Deleuze's thinking, as evidenced in his work preceding *A Thousand Plateaus*.

- 21 Frederik Stjernfelt, *Diagrammatology: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Phenomenology, Ontology, and Semiotics* (New York: Springer, 2011), 99.
- 22 Brecht, "Chance-Imagery," 9.
- 23 Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (New York: Harper, 1958).
- 24 Nyman, "An Interview with George Brecht," 106.
- 25 Brecht, "Chance-Imagery," 6.
- 26 Brecht, "Chance-Imagery," 6.
- 27 Brecht, "Chance-Imagery," 6.
- 28 Robinson, "Pollock's Concreteness," 159, italics in orig.
- 29 Gisliind Nabakowski, "An Interview with George Brecht" (1974), in Martin, *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, 95.
- 30 Robert Morris, "Anti Form" (1968), *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 44. Morris further writes, "Of the Abstract Expressionists only Pollock was able to recover process and hold onto it as part of the end form of the work. Pollock's recovery of the process involved a profound re-thinking of the role of both material and tools in making. The stick which drips paint is a tool which acknowledges the nature of the fluidity of the paint. Like any other tool it is still one that controls and transforms matter. But unlike the brush, it is in far greater sympathy with matter because it acknowledges the inherent tendencies and properties of that matter" (43). Morris made an experimental body of paintings inspired by Pollock between 1956 and 1960 before turning to performance and sculpture with a minimalist aesthetic. Similar to my argument about Brecht, it is in Morris's early paintings that Maurice Berger locates the roots of the artist's "transitive art based on task, process, and duration rather than on aesthetic finish." Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 22–24.
- 31 Pollock, "My Painting," 79.
- 32 Brecht, "Chance-Imagery," 6.
- 33 Clement Greenberg, "The Crisis of the Easel Picture," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon, 1961), 154–57.
- 34 The one area of Pollock's practice in this moment that seemed to embrace the chance effects of staining are his remarkable drawings on Japanese paper, quite private works whose material aspects and significance within the artist's oeuvre Stephanie Straine has beautifully analyzed. See Stephanie Straine, "Beyond Work: Pollock Drawing," in *Jackson Pollock: Blind Spots*, ed. Gavin Delahunty (London: Tate Publishing, 2015), 101–13.
- 35 Kaprow was introduced to Brecht in 1957 by his colleague at Rutgers University, Robert Watts, and for a time the three men lunched together almost weekly. Their conversations and mutual interests resulted in "Project in Multiple Dimensions," an unrealized grant proposal that would have funded research into emergent intermedia art forms. Kaprow, Brecht, and Watts, "Project in Multiple Dimensions" (1957–1958), reprinted in *Off Limits: Rutgers University and the Avant-Garde, 1957–1963*, ed. Marter, 153–59.
- 36 Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock" (1958), *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Kelley, 5–6.

- 37 Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," 6.
- 38 Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters" (1952), *The Tradition of the New* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), 25.
- 39 Allan Kaprow, "On Happenings," *Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 4 (Summer 1966): 282, italics in orig.
- 40 Dore Ashton, "Art: Japan's Gutai Group: Exhibition of Unorthodox Paintings by Young People Is at Martha Jackson's," *New York Times*, September 25, 1958, 66.
- 41 Michael Williams, "The Early Percussion Music of John Cage, 1935–1943," *Percussive Notes* (August 1993): 60–67.
- 42 John Cage, "A Composer's Confessions" (1948), cited in James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 14.
- 43 Cage, "A Composer's Confessions," 17.
- 44 Relatedly, Richard H. Brown has credited Cage's thinking to the mentorship of abstract filmmaker Oskar Fischinger, who spoke to the young composer about "the spirit inherent in materials." Brown, "The Spirit inside Each Object: John Cage, Oskar Fischinger, and 'The Future of Music,'" *Journal of the Society for American Music* 6, no. 1 (2012): 83–113.
- 45 Branden Joseph elaborates the impact of Bergson on Cage in *Random Order: Robert Rauschenberg and the Neo-Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 47–56; and "Chance, Indeterminacy, Multiplicity," in *The Anarchy of Silence: John Cage and Experimental Art*, ed. Julia Robinson (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2009), 210–38.
- 46 Cage began to formalize the use of clock time in his work in 1954, an innovation that James Pritchett credits to David Tudor's process of realizing Cage's score for *Music of Changes* (1951). Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 100–102.
- 47 Nyman, "An Interview with George Brecht," 115.
- 48 Brecht, "Chance-Imagery," 7.
- 49 Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun, vol. 7 (Köln: Walter König, 2005), 144.
- 50 Henry Flynt, telephone conversation with La Monte Young, June 17, 2002, cited by La Monte Young in "Why I Withdrew from Fluxus," in *Fluxus Scores and Instructions: The Transformative Years*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Roskilde, Denmark: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008), 53. See also Jackson Mac Low, "How Maciunas Met the New York Avant-Garde," in *Fluxus: Today and Yesterday, Art & Design profile* 28, ed. Johan Pijnappel (London: Academy Editions, 1993), 37–49.
- 51 George Maciunas, "This Is George Maciunas Speaking, Talking about Fluxus History," typed transcript of a recording made April 20, 1978, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives, Museum of Modern Art New York, I.855. My thanks to Colby Chamberlain for bringing this document to my attention.
- 52 A letter from George Brecht to La Monte Young dated June 12, 1961, suggests that Young had invited Brecht, perhaps on behalf of Maciunas, to organize a program of his own works at AG Gallery, but the event seems never to have materialized. *George Brecht—Notebooks*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun, vol. 6 (Köln: Walter König, 2005), n.p.
- 53 Owen Smith details these concerts, including Maciunas's film programming and collaborations with Frank Kuentler of the little magazine *Bread &*, in Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press, 1998), 31–38.

- 54 Jonas Mekas, postscript to “This Is George Maciunas Speaking,” n.p. The language of instantaneity is echoed in a secondhand account of Maciunas’s odd painting techniques offered by Yasunao Tone, who learned of them from Toshi Ichiyanagi upon his return to Japan from New York in the early 1960s: “He [Maciunas] did things like filling a bathtub with water, floating oil paint on the surface, then putting a canvas face down on the water and calling the results an ‘instant painting.’” Miki Kaneda, “The ‘John Cage Shock’ Is a Fiction! Interview with Yasunao Tone, 1,” August 12, 2012, Post: Notes on Modern & Contemporary Art Around the Globe, Museum of Modern Art, New York, https://post.moma.org/content_items/178-the-john-cage-shock-is-a-fiction-interview-with-tone-yasunao-1, accessed August 28, 2018.
- 55 Mekas, postscript to “This Is George Maciunas Speaking,” n.p.
- 56 “Works of G. Maciunas at AG,” exhibition announcement, 1961, Jean Brown papers.
- 57 “Statement by Don Shepherd,” printed on “Works by Don Shepherd at AG,” exhibition announcement (verso), 1961, Jean Brown papers.
- 58 George Maciunas, “Works by Don Shepherd at AG,” exhibition announcement (verso), 1961, Jean Brown papers.
- 59 George Maciunas, “Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art” (1962), in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss, exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993), 156–57.
- 60 Maciunas, “Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art,” 156–57. Although the term “concretism” already had an art-historical past, having been taken up by Theo van Doesburg, Wassily Kandinsky, Jean Arp, and Pierre Schaeffer, among others, Maciunas did not explicitly link his theorization of concretism to that history. While a valuable project, an analysis of the term’s recurrent appearance throughout twentieth-century art is beyond the scope of the present study.
- 61 George Maciunas, “Development of Western Abstract Chirography as a Product of Far Eastern Mentality” (1959), Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives, Museum of Modern Art, New York, n.p.
- 62 Maciunas, “Development of Western Abstract Chirography as a Product of Far Eastern Mentality,” n.p.
- 63 See Valerie Hellstein, “The Cage-iness of Abstract Expressionism,” *American Art* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 56–77; Catherine Craft, *An Audience of Artists: Dada, Neo-Dada, and the Emergence of Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Stephen Petersen, “Explosive Propositions: Artists React to the Atomic Age,” *Science in Context* 17, no. 4 (2004): 579–609; Robert Motherwell, ed., *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1981); and Ellen Landau and Jonathan Katz’s essays in Landau and Claude Cernuschi, *Pollock Matters* (Chestnut Hill, MA: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
- 64 Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, trans. Charles Beecher Hogan, George Kubler, and S. L. Faison (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc., 1948).
- 65 Motherwell, “Introduction,” *The Dada Painters and Poets*, xliii.
- 66 Robert Motherwell, “Addenda to the Museum of Modern Art *Lyric Suite* Questionnaire—from Memory . . . with Possible Chronological Slips,” August 8, 1969, Museum of Modern Art Archives, reprinted as “Selections from Robert Motherwell’s ‘Lyric Suite,’” *American Art* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 88–96.

- 67 In addition to being exhibited in the Whitney's 1957 *Annual Exhibition*, Ossorio's painting *Fluxus* appeared in *An Exhibition of Painting & Sculpture by Jackson Pollock, John Little Raoul Hague, Alfonso Ossorio*, Executive House, New York, November 8–December 4, 1956. See *1957 Annual Exhibition: Sculpture, Paintings, Watercolors* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1957), n.p.; and B. H. Friedman, *Alfonso Ossorio* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1973).
- 68 Gail Levin, "The Extraordinary Interventions of Alfonso Ossorio, Patron and Collector of Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner" and "Alfonso Ossorio and Zen," *Archives of American Art Journal* 50, nos. 1/2 (March 2011): 4–19. See also Ming Tiampo, "*Under Each Other's Spell*": *Gutai and New York* (Stony Brook, NY: Stony Brook Foundation, Inc., 2009), 6.
- 69 Oral history interview with Alfonso Ossorio, November 19, 1968, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
- 70 Alfonso Ossorio, *Jackson Pollock 1951* (New York: Betty Parsons Gallery, 1951), n.p.
- 71 Dick Higgins, "Something Else About Fluxus," *Art and Artists* 7, no. 7 (October 1972): 17–18.
- 72 Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex* (H. N. Abrams, 1988), 483, italics mine.
- 73 Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 359–60.

CHAPTER THREE

- 1 For tracking these early turns in Brecht's practice, I am indebted to Brecht scholar Julia Robinson's detailed accounts: "The Brechtian Event Score: A Structure in Fluxus," *Performance Research* 7, no. 3 (2002): 110–23; *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective* (Köln: Walther König, 2005); "From Abstraction to Model: In the Event of George Brecht & The Conceptual Turn in the Art of the 1960s" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2008); and "From Abstraction to Model: George Brecht's Events and the Conceptual Turn in Art of the 1960s," *October* 127 (Winter 2009): 77–108.
- 2 A selection of Brecht's scores appeared under the heading "sound scores" in *Kulchur* 1, no. 3 (1961): 19–20.
- 3 George Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun, vol. 3 (Köln: Walther König, 1991), 133. Brecht describes both *Card-Piece for Voice* and *Time-Table Music* as examples of "found notation."
- 4 Hermann Braun, "George Brecht Event Scores in Three Waves," in *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective*, 300–301.
- 5 The score is drafted in Brecht's notebook no. 13, 1964/summer 1965, 131, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Brecht mentions *Event Score* and its importance again in a letter to Maciunas of 1966, written from Rome (Hanns Sohm Archiv, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart). The score typewritten on a card appears in the Jean Brown papers, 1916–1995 (bulk 1958–1985), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, accession no. 890164, box 3, folder 34.
- 6 Robinson, "In the Event of George Brecht," in *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective*, 34.
- 7 George Brecht, "EVENTS. (assembled notes.)" (1961), in *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective*, 226.

- 8 Gisliind Nabakowski, “An Interview with George Brecht” (1974), in *An Introduction to George Brecht’s Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, by Henry Martin (Milan: Multhipla Edizioni, 1978), 95.
- 9 Henry Martin, “An Interview with George Brecht” (1967), in *An Introduction to George Brecht’s Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, 81–82.
- 10 Blake Gopnik, “Yoko Ono and MoMA, Together at Last,” *New York Times*, May 6, 2015, <https://nyti.ms/2uGWLkw>, accessed January 27, 2018.
- 11 Liz Kotz, “Object, Action and Ephemera,” in *Concept Action Language*, ed. Achim Hochdörfer, Wilfried Kuehn, and Susanne Neuburger (Vienna: mumok, 2010), 39–49.
- 12 George Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun, vol. 1 (Köln: Walther König, 1991), 14.
- 13 Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (London: Studio Vista, 1974), 63.
- 14 Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 3, 45, italics in orig.
- 15 Michael Nyman, “An Interview with George Brecht” (1976), in *An Introduction to George Brecht’s Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, 115.
- 16 James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 12.
- 17 John Cage, “Defense of Satie” (1948), in *John Cage*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Praeger, 1970).
- 18 See Emmett Williams and Ann Noel, eds., *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas 1931–1978* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 53; and Philip Corner, “Shiva Turns Back into Brahma,” in *Happening & Fluxus*, ed. Hanns Sohm and Harald Szeemann (Köln: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1970).
- 19 Philip Corner, “Piano Activities” (1962), reprinted in *Fluxus Scores and Instructions: The Transformative Years*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Roskilde, Denmark: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008), 72.
- 20 “Fluxus Festspiele neuester Musik,” newscast, Hessischer Rundfunk, September 22, 1962, black-and-white with sound, 3:30 min.; included in Michael Klant, *Kunst in Bewegung: Aktion, Kinetik, neue Medien* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2004), DVD.
- 21 Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 53.
- 22 Lawrence Alloway, “The Reuben Gallery: A Chronology,” *Topics in American Art Since 1945* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 151–54.
- 23 Brecht considered printing the invitation on a number of other functional items, including a shirt, hat, carton, and calendar. George Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun, vol. 4 (Köln: Walther König, 1998), 39. His choice of the paper bag as a printing surface—basically a flat container—prefigured Maciunas’s turn to envelopes as the pages of the first published Fluxus anthology, *Fluxus 1*, which I discuss in chapter 4.
- 24 Irmeline Lebeer, “Interview with George Brecht” (1973), in *An Introduction to George Brecht’s Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, 88.
- 25 David Joselit, “Dada’s Diagrams,” in *The Dada Seminars*, ed. Leah Dickerman and Matthew S. Witkovsky (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 223–27.
- 26 Brecht et al., “A Kind of Introduction,” in *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 1, n.p.

- 27 The red wooden heart appearing in Brecht's *Repository* of 1961 was reputedly gifted to the artist by Cornell. On the relationship of Brecht's work to Surrealism, see Anna Dezeuze, "Unpacking Cornell: Consumption and Play in the Work of Rauschenberg, Warhol and George Brecht," *Papers of Surrealism 2* (2004): 1–24. According to Julia Robinson, Brecht traveled to Chicago sometime in 1953 or 1954 expressly to visit Westermann. See Robinson, "Biographical Chronology," *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective*, 306.
- 28 Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 4, 27.
- 29 Following the lead of early 1960s practices that began increasingly to register process and to decouple idea from object, British philosopher Richard Wollheim published *Art and Its Objects: An Introduction to Aesthetics* in 1968 (New York: Harper and Row), which elaborated on the type-token dualism. See also Lydia Goehr, "Being True to the Work," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47, no. 1 (Winter 1989), 66n26; and chapter 1 of this book. Art historian and conservator Hanna Hölling has invoked the notion of the allo-graphic and type versus token in her thoroughgoing analysis of the evolving new media practice of Nam June Paik, *Paik's Virtual Archive: Time, Change, and Materiality in Media Art* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).
- 30 George Brecht, letter to George Maciunas, c. January 1963, Hanns Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany.
- 31 John Cage, "A Composer's Confessions" (1948), cited in James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 17.
- 32 In this context, Brecht read Ernst Cassirer's *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953) and *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1944); and Susanne Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art* (New York: New American Library, 1942) and *An Introduction to Symbolic Logic* (New York: Dover, 1953).
- 33 George Brecht, notes from February 27, 1959, in Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun, vol. 2 (Köln: Walther König, 1991), 132.
- 34 Alloway, "The Reuben Gallery: A Chronology," 152. See also Joshua Shannon, *The Disappearance of Objects: New York Art and the Rise of the Postmodern City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
- 35 Martin, *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, 39.
- 36 On the tactility of Duchamp's work, see Janine Mileaf, "Boxes, Books, and the *Boîte-en-Valise*," in *A Transatlantic Avant-Garde: American Artists in Paris, 1918–1939*, ed. Sophie Lévy and Christian Derouet (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 162–72; and Mileaf, *Please Touch: Dada and Surrealist Objects after the Readymade* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2010).
- 37 Donald Judd, "Specific Objects" (1965), reprinted in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1959–1975* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975); Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture I–III" (1966–1967) and "Notes on Sculpture IV: Beyond Objects" (1969), reprinted in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).
- 38 Billy Klüver, Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenburg, and Jean Tinguely, *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* (Philadelphia: Fine Arts Committee of the Arts Council of the YM/YWHA, 1962).
- 39 Lawrence Alloway, "The Expanding and Disappearing Work of Art" (1969), in *Topics in American Art Since 1965* (New York: Norton & Company, 1975), 207.

- 40 Nicolas and Elena Calas, *Hard Center*, exhibition brochure (New York: Thibaut Gallery, 1963), Jean Brown papers, italics in orig.
- 41 Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961); and Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Verso, 1994).
- 42 Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (1968), trans. James Benedict (New York: Verso, 1996). See also “Problems in Review: Planned Obsolescence,” *Harvard Business Review* (September–October 1959); and Kotz, “Object, Action and Ephemera.”
- 43 Dick Higgins, “Statement on Intermedia” (1966), in *Dé-coll/age 6*, ed. Wolf Vostell (1967), reprinted in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss, exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993), 172–73.
- 44 Higgins, “Statement on Intermedia,” 172–73.
- 45 Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 4, 92.
- 46 George Brecht, letter to William C. Seitz, 1961, William C. Seitz papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, reprinted in Robinson, *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective*, 230.
- 47 Robert Rauschenberg, quoted in Calvin Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 193–94.
- 48 Yve-Alain Bois, “Robert Rauschenberg’s Combines,” *Artforum* (March 2006): 247; and Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 85.
- 49 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Andy Warhol’s One-Dimensional Art,” in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 485, italics in orig. See also Lars Blunck, *Between Object & Event: Partizipationskunst zwischen Mythos und Teilhabe* (Weimar: VDG, 2003).
- 50 Other Fluxus artists who incorporated chairs into their work include Alison Knowles, whose score for *Wounded Furniture* (1965) entails the repair and bandaging of an old, used item of furniture, and Nye Ffarrabas, whose 1966–1967 installation at Judson Gallery in New York symbolized racial politics through the inclusion of black and white chairs. Nye Ffarrabas, “Nye Ffarrabas (formerly Bici Forbes Hendricks),” *Remembering Judson House*, ed. Elly Dickason and Jerry G. Dickason (New York: Judson Memorial Church, 2000), 321–34.
- 51 Andrew Forge, *Rauschenberg* (New York: Abrams, 1972), 32.
- 52 Martin B. Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 55.
- 53 Michelson writes, “Cubism corresponded, then, as representation, to that relatively early ‘objectivist’ stage of phenomenological method which produced the obsessive encircling of the object—the object of common use as Object of Knowledge. The analytic articulation of Table, the Bottle, the Guitar, has, when seen in this particular light, the aspect of those class-room exercises which are said to have absorbed Husserl’s students. They constitute an overture to a more radically conceived investigation of the nature of consciousness.” Annette Michelson, “Robert Morris—An Aesthetics of Transgression,” in *Robert Morris* (Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969), 63.
- 54 Nyman, “An Interview with George Brecht,” in *An Introduction to George Brecht’s Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, 80.

- 55 Lebeer, "Interview with George Brecht," in *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, 88.
- 56 Cited in Hiroko Ikegami, *The Great Migrator: Robert Rauschenberg and the Global Rise of American Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 109.
- 57 My thanks to Horst Kloeber for sharing his deep knowledge of *Black Market* with me.
- 58 George Brecht notebook no. 12, c. 1963, n.p., Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift.
- 59 Lebeer, "Interview with George Brecht," in *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, 87.
- 60 George Brecht, letter to George Maciunas, n.d. (c. early 1963), Hanns Sohm Archive.
- 61 I have examined the problems raised by Brecht's paradoxical object-arrangements when they enter museological space in Harren, "The Provisional Work of Art: George Brecht's Footnotes at LACMA, 1969," *Getty Research Journal* 8 (2016): 177–97.
- 62 George Brecht notebook no. 8, June 1961–September 1962, 54, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift.
- 63 George Brecht, letter to George Maciunas, n.d. (c. early 1963), Hanns Sohm Archive; George Maciunas, letter to George Brecht, January 6, 1963, Jean Brown papers.
- 64 George Brecht notebook no. 28, December 8, 1973–July 19, 1975, 111, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift.
- 65 George Maciunas, letter to George Brecht, January 6, 1963, Jean Brown papers.
- 66 George Brecht, letter to George Maciunas, n.d. (c. early 1963), Hanns Sohm Archive.
- 67 George Brecht notebook no. 15, c. May 1966–June 1966, 41, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift.
- 68 Owen Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press, 1998), 31.
- 69 "Machinery" was a term that appeared in concert announcements to describe Robert Morris's forthcoming contribution to the series, which was ultimately a room-sized installation of a spiraling corridor that gradually narrowed to a dead-end corner.
- 70 La Monte Young, letter to David Tudor, c. 1961, David Tudor papers, 1884–1998 (bulk 1940–1996), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, accession no. 980039.
- 71 John Cage, *For the Birds: John Cage in Conversation with Daniel Charles* (Boston: Marion Boyers, 1981), 150. On the ideological split between Young's transcendentalism and Cage's multiplicity, see Branden Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage* (New York: Zone, 2011), 109–17.
- 72 Brecht, *George Brecht—Notebooks*, vol. 4, 172.
- 73 Virginia B. Spivey, "The Minimal Presence of Simone Forti," *Woman's Art Journal* 30, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2009): 14. Above all, I am indebted to Megan Metcalf for sharing her knowledge of Forti's work with me. See Metcalf, "In the New Body: Simone Forti's Dance Constructions (1960–61) and Their Acquisition by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2018).
- 74 Virginia B. Spivey, manuscript of an unpublished interview with Simone Forti, 2000.
- 75 Simone Forti, *Handbook in Motion* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design), 59.

- 76 Forti, *Handbook in Motion*, 64.
- 77 Walter De Maria, “Boxes for Meaningless Work,” in *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, ed. La Monte Young (New York, 1963), n.p.
- 78 Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 117.
- 79 Robert Morris, “Blank Form,” in *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, unique handbound prototype held in the Jean Brown papers.
- 80 Yvonne Rainer, “Out of a Corner of the ‘60s,” lecture, Department of Art, University of California, Irvine, April 2, 2008.
- 81 Nyman, “An Interview with George Brecht,” in *An Introduction to George Brecht’s Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, 120n19.
- 82 Hermann Braun in conversation with Bogomir Ecker in *Übergangsbogen und Überhöhungsrampe: Naturwissenschaftliche und künstlerische Verfahren* (Hamburg: Material, 1996), 70, translation mine.
- 83 *Octobre des arts, Lyon, 1986* (Lyon: Musée Saint-Pierre art contemporain, 1986), 49.
- 84 Maciunas, “Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art” (1962), in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss, exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993), 156–57.
- 85 Maciunas, “Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art,” 156–57.
- 86 Dick Higgins, *Jefferson’s Birthday / Postface* (New York: Something Else Press, 1964), 83–84; reprinted in *Intermedia, Fluxus and the Something Else Press: Selected Writings by Dick Higgins*, ed. Steve Clay and Ken Friedman (Catskill, NY: Siglio, 2018), 79–80.
- 87 Kristine Stiles offers an excellent analysis of the Fluxus notion of the concrete in her essay, “Between Water and Stone: Fluxus Performance: A Metaphysics of Acts,” in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, 92–93. For another account of concretism relevant to the period, see Elise Archias, *The Concrete Body: Yvonne Rainer, Carolee Schneemann, Vito Acconci* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016). Monica Amor’s study of Latin American discourse in the 1940s–1960s around a renovated notion of the concrete shows a remarkable correlation to the North American context, although I have encountered no evidence that Fluxus artists were aware of those debates. Amor, *Theories of the Nonobject: Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, 1944–1969* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).
- 88 Maciunas, “Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art,” 157.
- 89 George Brecht, “EVENTS. (assembled notes.)” in Robinson, *George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective*, 226.
- 90 Dick Higgins, “Blank Images” (1970), *A Dialectic of Centuries: Notes Towards a Theory of the New Arts* (New York: Printed Editions, 1978), 78.
- 91 Dick Higgins, “Exemplativist Manifesto” (1976), in *A Dialectic of Centuries*, 156, 159; reprinted in *Intermedia, Fluxus and the Something Else Press*, 246–55.

CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 George Maciunas, letter to Robert Watts, n.d.; and George Maciunas, letter to Emmett Williams, n.d., italics mine, both Jean Brown papers, 1916–1995 (bulk 1958–1985), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, accession no. 890164.
- 2 George Maciunas, letter to Emmett Williams, n.d., italics mine, Jean Brown papers.

- 3 Owen Smith, *Fluxus: The History of An Attitude* (San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press, 1998), 122, 177.
- 4 George Brecht, "Summary," c. 1962, Lawrence Alloway papers, 1935–2003, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, accession no. 2003.M.46.
- 5 This is Alison Knowles's characterization. Estera Milman, "Road Shows, Street Events, and Fluxus People; A Conversation with Alison Knowles," *Visible Language* 26, no. 1/2 (1992): 99.
- 6 Christina Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 253. See also Maria Gough, "The Art of Production," in *The Small Utopia: Ars Multiplicata*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2012).
- 7 George Maciunas, letter to Tomas Schmit, January 1964, cited in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1988), 37, italics mine.
- 8 In the early 1980s, Barbara Moore founded ReFlux Editions. Under this moniker, she compiled Fluxus editions from original material produced by Maciunas and others and continued to offer them for sale under the pretense that Maciunas wished for Fluxus multiples to remain in print indefinitely.
- 9 While other scholars have referred to these works as Fluxus multiples or Fluxkits, I will refer to them mainly as Fluxboxes, given my emphasis on the materiality of their containers. Notably, and resonant with the terms of my argument, the format does not even have a consistent name among Fluxus artists.
- 10 All descriptions of Fluxboxes and their contents in this chapter correspond to examples held in the Jean Brown papers. As I aim to show, however, differences in content across Fluxus editions serve to reinforce rather than subvert their critical aims.
- 11 On the significance of *An Anthology of Chance Operations* and Maciunas's role in its production, see Liz Kotz, "Poetry Machines," in *±1961: Founding the Expanded Arts*, ed. Julia Robinson and Christian Xatrec (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2013), 50–67.
- 12 George Maciunas, *Fluxus Newsletter No. 1*, 1962, reproduced in *Fluxus Etc. Addenda I: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, ed. Jon Hendricks (New York: Ink &, 1983), 140.
- 13 Maciunas, *Fluxus Newsletter No. 1*, in *Fluxus Etc. Addenda I*, 140.
- 14 Barbara Moore has identified precedents for *Fluxus 1* in the Japanese neo-dada artist Gempei Akasegawa's 1963 bolted stack of counterfeit yen bills and Dieter Roth's rivet-bound design for *Material 2* (1959), a magazine edited and published by Daniel Spoerri. Fortunato Depero's 1927 bolted volume *Depero Futurista* could be another inspiration and is often mentioned by scholars in reference to *Fluxus 1*, but it is uncertain whether Maciunas knew of it. Barbara Moore, *Fluxus 1: A History of the Edition* (self-published pamphlet, 1985), n.p. To this list of models I would add Duchamp's ring-bound "books-in-the-round" (*Some French Moderns Says McBride*, 1922) and unbound "pages in liberty" (*The Green Box*, 1934), as described by David Joselit in "Dada's Diagrams," in *The Dada Seminars*, ed. Leah Dickerman and Matthew S. Witkovsky (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 223–27.
- 15 John Cage, "Composition as Process: II. Indeterminacy" (1958), in *Silence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 36.
- 16 George Maciunas, letter to Ben Vautier, January 23, 1965, quoted in Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 109.

- 17 Moore, *Fluxus 1: A History of the Edition*, n.p.
- 18 Dick Higgins, "A Child's History of Fluxus," *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of the Inter-media* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 88–89.
- 19 Benjamin Patterson, "Ich bin froh, daß Sie mir diese Frage gestellt haben," *Kunstforum* 115 (September–October 1991): 174, translation mine.
- 20 Per Kirkeby, "Fluxus," in 1962 *Wiesbaden Fluxus 1982: Eine kleine Geschichte von Fluxus in drei Teilen*, ed. René Block and Anne Marie Freybourg (Berlin: Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, 1983), 145–46, translation mine.
- 21 See Thomas Kellein, *The Dream of Fluxus: George Maciunas; An Artist's Biography*, trans. Fiona Elliott (London: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 2007); Julia Robinson, "Maciunas as Producer: Performative Design in the Art of the 1960s," *Grey Room* 33 (October 2008): 75; and Colby Chamberlain, "Design in Flux," *Art in America* (October 2014): 118–23.
- 22 Benjamin Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 57.
- 23 Hannah Higgins, *Fluxus Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 179.
- 24 Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 71–82. The Fluxus "news-policy" letters in which these plans are outlined appear in Hendricks, *Fluxus Etc.: Addenda I*.
- 25 The Fluxboxes were fashioned out of wood (or cardboard) after Brecht's example until June 1964, when Maciunas fully transitioned to the cheaper readymade plastic kind. Larry Miller, "Transcript of the Videotaped Interview with George Maciunas" (1978), in *Fluxus Etc.: Addenda I*, 18.
- 26 Miller, "Transcript of the Videotaped Interview with George Maciunas," 18.
- 27 Although now part of gentrified Soho, Canal Street has to some extent maintained this identity. The cheap wares hawked by discount retailers have been capitalized by yet another generation of artists, including John Miller with his gilded and dung-colored encrustations of Canal's "abject excess" of "useless shit"; see Matt Keegan, "Public Image Limited," *Artforum* (January 2010): 158. As part of a series of public performances and site-specific installations on and about Canal Street hosted by Art in General in 2001–2002, Matthew Buckingham published a postcard edition recalling the early history of the area. Until the nineteenth century, a stream used to run along Canal Street, draining water into the "shocking hole" of the massive Collect Pond a few blocks south. When the stream was widened at the turn of the century to facilitate the pond's draining, it effectively became an "open sewer" that, even after being covered over in 1819, "kept Canal Street smelling foul for years." Buckingham, *Canal Street Canal*, unlimited postcard edition (New York: Art in General, 2002).
- 28 Milman, "Road Shows, Street Events, and Fluxus People; A Conversation with Alison Knowles," 99.
- 29 Milman, "Road Shows, Street Events, and Fluxus People; A Conversation with Alison Knowles," 99.
- 30 Yve-Alain Bois, "The Use Value of 'Formless,'" in *Formless: A User's Guide*, by Bois and Rosalind Krauss (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 24; and Owen Smith, "Developing a Fluxable Forum," in *The Fluxus Reader*, ed. Ken Friedman (Chichester, UK: Academy Editions, 1998), 6.
- 31 Miller, "Transcript of the Videotaped Interview with George Maciunas," 18. See also Cornelia Lauf, "Fluxus Soapbox," in *Sculpture and the Vitrine*, ed. John C. Welchman (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 179–96.

- 32 Notably, when Maciunas teamed with Robert Watts and Lee Heflin in 1966 to produce commercially mass-produced, functional gag items—stick-on jewelry, paper aprons, sweatshirts, disposable dinnerware, postcards and stamps, low-cost furniture, playing cards and games—he did so under the name Implosions, Inc., maintaining the integrity of Fluxus items' critical uselessness.
- 33 Miller, "Transcript of the Videotaped Interview with George Maciunas," 20.
- 34 Grace Glueck, "Art Notes: M-M-Multiples," *New York Times*, October 31, 1965.
- 35 Constance W. Glenn, *The Great American Pop Art Store: Multiples of the Sixties* (Santa Monica, CA: Smart Art Press, 1997), 52, 64; and Cheryl Harper, *A Happening Place: How the Arts Council Revolutionized the Philadelphia Art Scene in the Sixties* (Philadelphia: Jewish Community Centers of Greater Philadelphia, 2003).
- 36 Marian Goodman, quoted in Peter Schjeldahl, "Onward and Upward with the Arts: Dealership," *New Yorker* (February 2, 2004): 38.
- 37 See Joshua Binion Cahn, *What Is an Original Print? Principles Recommended by the Print Council of America* (New York: Print Council of America, Inc., 1961). Of-the-moment critiques of multiples include Virginia Allen (of Tamarind Lithography workshop), "The Problem of the 'Original Print,'" *Artforum* (April 1963): 53; and Max Kozloff, "Three-Dimensional Prints and the Retreat from Originality," *Artforum* (December 1965): 25–27.
- 38 Katerina Vatsella, *Edition MAT: Die Entstehung einer Kunstform* (Bremen: Hauschild H. M. GmbH, 1998).
- 39 Schwartz showed Fluxus works at his Milan gallery and was particularly close with George Brecht, with whom he shared drafts of his catalogue raisonné text on Duchamp. On October 9, 1967, Schwartz wrote to Brecht in Villefranche, "I can't tell you how grateful I am for your willingness to go through my text on Duchamp. Your remarks and corrections are most pertinent and useful. Thank you ever so much. I am sending you the 3 following chapters and when I receive them here, will send you the last 3. Take it at leisure, if you can send them back to me say in ten days time that would be fine. Duchamp who has read the book likes it very much. But his opinion is of course prejudiced: the book is about him! So I really need the opinion of somebody like you." Arturo Schwartz, letter to George Brecht, Hanns Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany. The publication referred to is Schwartz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1969).
- 40 Adina Kamien-Kazhdan, "Duchamp, Man Ray, and Replication," in *The Small Utopia: Ars Multiplicata*, 105. See also Martha Buskirk, "Thoroughly Modern Marcel," *October* 70 (Fall 1994): 113–25.
- 41 Quoted in Calvin Tomkins, "Marcel Duchamp," *The Bride and the Bachelors* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 40.
- 42 Quoted in Otto Hahn, "Passport No. G255300," *Art and Artists* 1, no. 4 (July 1966): 7.
- 43 Cécile Whiting, *A Taste for Pop: Pop Art, Gender, and Consumer Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 26.
- 44 Grace Glueck, "Gallery Market Hawks Art on Rye," *New York Times*, October 8, 1964.
- 45 "We are also planning a second yearbox—Fluxus 2—which will be limited to book events only, i.e. events that are enacted by the reader automatically as he inspects the book or box." George Maciunas, "Fluxus Newsletter," c. March 1965; cited in Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 122.

- 46 See Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*; Kristine Stiles, “Between Water and Stone: Fluxus and Performance; A Metaphysics of Acts,” in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss, exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993); Chris Thompson, *Felt: Fluxus, Joseph Beuys, and the Dalai Lama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); and Natasha Lushetich, *Fluxus: The Practice of Non-Duality* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014).
- 47 Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), first published 1977 by Viking Press (New York).
- 48 Jack Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture: The Effects of Science and Technology on the Sculpture of This Century* (New York: G. Braziller, 1968).
- 49 David Getsy, “Tactility or Opticality, Henry Moore or David Smith: Herbert Read and Clement Greenberg on the Art of Sculpture, 1956,” *Sculpture Journal* 17, no. 2 (December 2008): 73–86. See also Alex Potts, “Tactility: The Interrogation of Medium in Art of the 1960s,” *Art History* 27, no. 2 (April 2004): 282–304; and Peter Dent, ed., *Sculpture and Touch* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014).
- 50 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Sculpture: Publicity and the Poverty of Experience,” in *White Cube/Black Box*, ed. Sabine Breitwieser (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 1996), 164.
- 51 Buchloh, “Sculpture: Publicity and the Poverty of Experience,” 171.
- 52 Buchloh articulates this point in terms of sculpture’s history: “It is precisely this shift from the collection to the mere ‘accumulation’ of more or less identical objects in the work of Arman and Oldenburg at the beginning of the Sixties that makes the universalized conditions of fetishization apparent and with them the rapid disappearance of those forms of experience that had been tied to the knowledge of use value and the temporality and intimacy of the object.” “Sculpture: Publicity and the Poverty of Experience,” 169–70.
- 53 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Robert Watts: Animate Objects, Inanimate Subjects,” in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 531–53.
- 54 Buchloh, “Robert Watts: Animate Objects, Inanimate Subjects,” 551.
- 55 See Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*; Stiles, “Between Water and Stone: Fluxus and Performance; A Metaphysics of Acts”; and David Joselit, “The Readymade Metabolized: Fluxus in Life,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 63/64, Wet/Dry (Spring/Autumn 2013). Liz Kotz singularly addresses the holes that appear in some of Dieter Roth’s publications in her essay “Poetry Machines,” in Robinson and Xatrec, eds., *±1961: Founding the Expanded Arts*.
- 56 William Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, I,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 9 (Spring 1985): 11–12.
- 57 D. W. Winnicott, “Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena,” in *Playing and Reality* (New York: Basic Books, 1971). Anna Dezeuze has also turned to Winnicott in order to theorize a broad range of newly interactive artworks of this period; see Dezeuze, “Play, Ritual and Politics: Transitional Artworks in the 1960s,” in *The “Do-It-Yourself” Artwork: Participation from Fluxus to New Media*, ed. Dezeuze (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2010).
- 58 See Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 21n2.

- 59 Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria," in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 82.
- 60 Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies: After Marx and Freud*, trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 22–23, italics in orig.
- 61 Liz Kotz, "Object, Action and Ephemera," in *Concept Action Language*, ed. Achim Hochdörfer, Wilfried Kuehn, and Susanne Neuburger (Vienna: mumok, 2010), 47.
- 62 "A Theater Whatzit," *Village Voice*, March 30, 1960, 11; cited in Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 113. See also Dick Higgins, "Boredom and Danger," *Something Else Newsletter* 1, no. 9 (December 1968); and Ina Blom, "Boredom and Oblivion," in *The Fluxus Reader*, 63–90.
- 63 Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 11.
- 64 I borrow the terms "pre-personal" and "pre-ego-logical" from Lushetich, *Fluxus: The Practice of Non-Duality*, 119–23.
- 65 George Maciunas, letter to Tomas Schmit, January 1964, cited in Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 37.
- 66 Retort, *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (New York: Verso, 2005), 179, italics in orig.
- 67 Catherine Flood and Gavin Grindon, *Disobedient Objects* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014).
- 68 Allan Kaprow, "Maestro Maciunas" (1996), in Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 243, italics in orig.
- 69 Leokadija Maciunas, "My Son," c. 1979, manuscript translated from Lithuanian, George Maciunas files, n.p., Jean Brown papers. On the meaning of the Flux funeral, see also Lushetich, *Fluxus: The Practice of Non-Duality*, 174–82.
- 70 Robinson, "Maciunas as Producer: Performative Design in the Art of the 1960s," 67.
- 71 Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 63.
- 72 George Brecht, letter to George Maciunas, January 11, 1963, Hanns Sohm Archive; Ben Vautier and Marcel Alocco, "A Conversation about Something Else: An Interview with George Brecht" (1965), in *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, by Henry Martin (Milan: Multipla Edizioni, 1978), 68.
- 73 Dick Higgins, "Something Else about Fluxus," *Art and Artists* 7, no. 7 (October 1972): 16, italics mine.
- 74 Leo Bersani's notion of "impersonal narcissism" and Kaja Silverman's theorization of "active idealization" have been helpful to my formulation of this model of subjectivity in flux, as has Miwon Kwon's writing on the experience of "intimacy-in-distance and distance-in-intimacy" in the work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips, *Intimacies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Tim Dean, Hal Foster, Silverman, and Bersani, "A Conversation with Leo Bersani," *October* 82 (Autumn 1997): 3–16; and Miwon Kwon, "The Becoming of a Work of Art: FGT and a Possibility of Renewal, a Chance to Share, a Fragile Truce," in *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, ed. Julie Ault (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006).
- 75 See Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude*; and Armstrong and Rothfuss, eds., *In the Spirit of Fluxus*.
- 76 Dick Higgins, letter to George Maciunas, November 19, 1974, Jean Brown papers.

CHAPTER FIVE

- 1 George Maciunas, *Fluxus News Leter* [sic] No. 5, January 1, 1963, reprinted in *Fluxus Etc. Addenda I: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, ed. Jon Hendricks (New York: Ink &, 1983), 155.
- 2 George Brecht, letter to George Maciunas, n.d., and Nam June Paik, letter to George Maciunas, January 15, 1963, Hanns Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany.
- 3 Ben Vautier and Marcel Alocco, “A Conversation about Something Else: an Interview with George Brecht” (1965), in *An Introduction to George Brecht’s Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, by Henry Martin (Milan: Multhipla Edizioni, 1978), 73.
- 4 Takako Saito, letters to the author, June 16 and November 30, 2010.
- 5 Benjamin Patterson, “Ich bin froh, daß Sie mir diese Frage gestellt haben,” *Kunstforum* 115 (September–October 1991): 174, translation mine.
- 6 Thomas Kellein highlights the problematic nature of many of Maciunas’s Fluxus plans in *The Dream of Fluxus: George Maciunas; An Artist’s Biography*, trans. Fiona Elliott (London: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 2007).
- 7 On the under-examined role and problematic treatment of women within the Fluxus group, see Kathy O’Dell, “Fluxus Feminus,” *TDR* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 43–60; and Alison Knowles et al., “An Evening with Fluxus Women: A Roundtable Discussion,” *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 19, no. 3 (2009): 369–89.
- 8 Dick Higgins, letter to George Maciunas, August 23, 1966, Hanns Sohm Archive.
- 9 Andreas Huyssen, “Back to the Future: Fluxus in Context,” in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss, exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993), 145.
- 10 George Maciunas, letter to Emmett Williams, c. July 1964, Jean Brown papers, 1916–1995 (bulk 1958–1985), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, accession no. 890164.
- 11 Leah Dickerman, “Introduction,” in *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 1.
- 12 Statement by Nam June Paik, *Fluxus Etc.*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Bloomfield Hills, MI: Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, 1981), 44.
- 13 Owen Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press, 1998), 179.
- 14 As I quoted Higgins in the previous chapter: “For each artist, the Fluxus work which he did was a part of a *different body* which had its own integrity: there was not even one artist who did only Fluxus work among the original Fluxus people.” Dick Higgins, “Something Else about Fluxus,” *Art and Artists* 7, no. 7 (October 1972): 16, italics mine.
- 15 For more of Robert Filliou’s biography, see Pierre Tilman, *Robert Filliou, nationalité poète* (Dijon, France: Presses du réel, 2007).
- 16 Marcel Duchamp, “Where Do We Go From Here?” (1961), *Studio International* 189, no. 973 (January–February 1975): 28.
- 17 Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1988), 236.
- 18 Knowles et al., “An Evening with Fluxus Women: A Roundtable Discussion,” 379.
- 19 An adjacent node of the Soho avant-garde network deserves mention here, which points to the complex racial micropolitics of the downtown scene: Ornette Coleman’s ground-

floor performance space at 131 Prince Street, four blocks north of Canal Street and one of the sites developed by Maciunas. Known as Artist House, it served as the location for the recording of Coleman's 1970 album *Friends and Neighbors: Live at Prince Street*, whose cover image, a photograph by Raymond Ross, shows two kids—one black, one white—loitering outside the studio's scrawled-upon doors. The album cover mimics, perhaps knowingly, Maciunas's label design for Brecht's *Closed on Mondays* (1969), or vice versa. See Kellein, *The Dream of Fluxus*, 135. On the racial politics of avant-garde music of the 1960s, see George Lewis, "Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives," *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 91–122; and Benjamin Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011).

- 20 Tomas Schmit, letter to Gilbert Silverman, February 3, 1981, reprinted in *What's Fluxus? What's Not! Why*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Rio de Janeiro: Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, 2002), 123–24.
- 21 Robert Filliou, "De La Galerie Légitime," in *Happening & Fluxus*, ed. Hanns Sohm and Harald Szeemann (Köln: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1970), n.p.; Daniel Spoerri, *An Anecdoted Topography of Chance (Re-Anecdoted Version)* (New York: Something Else Press, 1966), 146–48.
- 22 Telephone interview with Marianne Filliou, May 9, 2011.
- 23 Anna Deuze situates Filliou's working methods within the moment's emergent model of assemblage or bricolage in her essay "Assemblage, Bricolage, and the Practice of Everyday Life," *Art Journal* 67, no. 1 (2008): 31–37.
- 24 Stéphane Mallarmé, "Pauvre enfant pâle," *Stéphane Mallarmé: Collected Poems*, trans. Henry Weinfield (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 95.
- 25 Georges Fragerolle, "Le Fumisme," *L'Hydropathe* (May 5, 1880), trans. Jeffrey S. Weiss and cited in Weiss, "'Marcel Duchamp Qui est Inquiétant': Avant-Gardism and the Culture of Mystification and *blague*," in *The Popular Culture of Modern Art: Picasso, Duchamp, and Avant-Gardism, c. 1909–17* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 143. On *fumisme*, see also Mary Gluck, "The Decadent and the Culture of Hysteria," in *Popular Bohemia: Modernism and Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); and Daniel Grojnowski and Bernard Sarrazin, eds., *L'Esprit fumiste et les rires fin de siècle* (Paris: José Corti, 1990).
- 26 Catherine Dousteysier-Khoze, "Fumisme: le rire jaune du Chat Noir," in *(Ab)normalities*, ed. Dousteysier-Khoze and Paul Scott (Durham, UK: University of Durham, 2001), 157.
- 27 Weiss, "'Marcel Duchamp Qui est Inquiétant': Avant-Gardism and the Culture of Mystification and *blague*," 143.
- 28 Hans-Werner Schmidt and Daniel Spoerri, "Filliou ist mein großer Bruder, aber ich bin seine Mutter," an interview with Daniel Spoerri, in *Robert Filliou 1926–1987 Zum Gedächtnis*, ed. Schmidt (Düsseldorf: Städtisches Kunsthalle, 1988), 11, confirmed in author's interview with Daniel Spoerri, Vienna, May 22, 2011.
- 29 Tilman, *Robert Filliou, nationalité poète*, 42; all quotations of this text are my translation.
- 30 On the artistic context of this time and region, see Rosemary O'Neill, *Art and Visual Culture on the French Riviera, 1956–1971: The Ecole de Nice* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).
- 31 Robert Filliou and Marianne Staffeldt, "Partnership Piece (for George and Dana [sic] Brecht)" (1965), Robert Filliou files, Hanns Sohm Archive.

- 32 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "The Posters of Lawrence Weiner," *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 567–68. On Swenson's protest, see Grace Glueck, "300 Hippies Protest at Opening of Modern Museum Dada Show," *New York Times*, March 26, 1968.
- 33 George Brecht and Robert Filliou, *Games at the Cedilla, or the Cedilla Takes Off* (New York: Something Else Press, 1967), n.p.; Robert Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, ed. Kasper König (Köln: Verlag Gebr. König, 1970), 198.
- 34 See Barry Miles, *Beat Hotel: Ginsberg, Burroughs and Corso in Paris, 1957–1963* (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 233.
- 35 These varied ludic formats are documented in Brecht and Filliou's compendium *Games at the Cedilla, or the Cedilla Takes Off*. Alfred the bricklayer, Antoine the fisherman, and Fernand the plumber are Villefranche friends named by Filliou in *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, 202.
- 36 George Brecht, notebook no. 17, July–October 1966, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, n.p.
- 37 Cyrille Bret, "Robert Filliou et l'esprit de Mai 68," in *20/21. siècles, Cahiers du Centre Pierre Francastel*, no. 2, *Fluxus en France*, ed. Bertrand Clavez (Autumn 2005): 47n1.
- 38 Anthony Huberman has seen resonances of the Cédille's productive failure in twenty-first-century gestures toward adhococracy in contemporary art; Huberman, "Talent Is Overrated," *Artforum* 48, no. 3 (2009): 109–10. See also Martin Patrick's wide-ranging account of Filliou's work, "Unfinished Filliou: On the Fluxus Ethos and the Origins of Relational Aesthetics," *Art Journal* 69, no. 1–2 (2010): 44–61.
- 39 Jasper Bernes, *The Work of Art in the Age of Deindustrialization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017).
- 40 George Brecht, "Artists and Dealers," *Open* no. 2, ed. Marcel Alocco (Nice: May 1967), n.p. Alongside Brecht's account are confirming testimonies on Stünken's practices by Wolf Vostell, Daniel Spoerri, and Karl Gerstner.
- 41 George Brecht, letter to Joe Jones, July 22, 1967, George Brecht correspondence, Hanns Sohm Archive.
- 42 From Spoerri's account reproduced in Brecht, "Artists and Dealers," n.p.
- 43 Hugh Fox, "Interview with Dick Higgins," *Stony Hills: The New England Alternative Press Review* 1, no. 2 (June 23, 1977): 6.
- 44 Tilman, *Robert Filliou, nationalité poète*, 58.
- 45 Breton defined the Surrealist object-poem thus: "J'ai défini le poème-object comme une composition qui tend à combiner les ressources de la poésie et de la plastique en spéculant sur leur pouvoir d'exaltation réciproque." André Breton, *Entretiens 1913–1952* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), 162.
- 46 Jean Brown's letter is reprinted in George Brecht and Robert Filliou, *Games at the Cedilla, or the Cedilla Takes Off*, n.p.; Robert and Marianne's replies can be found in the Filliou files of the Jean Brown papers.
- 47 Notably similar is the material treatment of language by Filliou's friend and fellow poet-turned-visual-artist Marcel Broodthaers, who employed various kinds of shells as a kind of anti-signifier for mutability and inscrutability. See Rachel Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964–1976* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 9–45.
- 48 Tilman, *Robert Filliou, nationalité poète*, 125.

- 49 Not coincidentally, Dick Higgins had selected a question mark to serve as the logo of Something Else Press. Coincidentally, but striking in its timing and design, there exists a poster created during the May 1968 student uprisings in Paris that is dominated by a bold, cedilla-like question mark and reads “*Quoi de changé?*” Atelier populaire ex-Ecole des Beaux-Arts, *Quoi de changé?*, May 1968, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.
- 50 Robert Filliou, *Poème invalide* (1965), in *Phantomas*, no. 50 (1965): 10–12.
- 51 One might also translate *manquer* as lack, which opens up a rich psychoanalytic theoretical terrain that I have chosen not to pursue here.
- 52 Tilman, *Robert Filliou, nationalité poète*, 174.
- 53 See documents reproduced in *Happening & Fluxus*, ed. Sohm and Szeemann, n.p., translation mine.
- 54 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Formalism and Historicity,” in *New Realisms: 1957–1962: Object Strategies Between Readymade and Spectacle*, ed. Julia Robinson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 96n27.
- 55 Mimmo Rotella, letter to Marianne Filliou, November 12, 1965, Hanns Sohm Archive.
- 56 Alison Knowles, letter to George Brecht, c. January 1967, Hanns Sohm Archive.
- 57 Most Fluxus affiliates were neither apolitical nor radically political in the sense of regularly protesting publicly or taking a leadership role in political organizing. Yet they were clearly concerned with the politics of their day, especially the Vietnam War, given that many of them—Maciunas, Brecht, Williams, and Patterson—had served in the US military. Although much of the work discussed in this chapter does not propose clear, pragmatic, or actionist political tactics, it does model an impactful micro-politics of everyday being. While I won’t address the comparison in depth here, Filliou and Brecht’s small-*p* politics would be interesting to consider in comparison to the overtly radical and divisive statements and actions made by Maciunas around this time, for instance his picketing of a Stockhausen concert in 1964 in the name of fighting “the domination of white, European-US ruling-class art.” See Hannah Higgins, *Fluxus Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 71–82.
- 58 George Brecht, letter to General Delegate of North Vietnam in Paris, May 16, 1967, Hanns Sohm Archive. Brecht also mentions this idea in a letter to Jan van der Marck dated May 21, 1967 (also in the Hanns Sohm Archive), in which he recounts having asked Fischbach Gallery to donate the proceeds of fourteen works toward the purchase of medical supplies for Vietnam.
- 59 Book jacket text (front and back flaps), Brecht and Filliou, *Games at the Cedilla, or the Cedilla Takes Off*.
- 60 Lyndon Johnson, “Remarks at the University of Michigan” (May 22, 1964), American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/239689>, accessed April 16, 2019. Bills passed include the Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act, and Immigration Act, along with the establishment of Medicaid, Medicare, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more on the Great Society, see Julian E. Zelizer, *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Lyndon Johnson, Congress, and the Battle for the Great Society* (New York: Penguin, 2015).
- 61 Paul Goodman, “The Great Society,” *New York Review of Books*, October 14, 1965, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1965/10/14/the-great-society/>, accessed July 12, 2017.
- 62 Robert Filliou, *Solidaritätsveranstaltung für Angela Davis*, exhibition announcement, Galerie Art Intermedia, Köln, 1971, Hanns Sohm Archive.

- 63 Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, 45, 81; and “The Principles of Poetic Economy,” in *Robert Filliou [sic]* (Hannover: Sprengel-Museum, 1984), 131–32.
- 64 Tilman, *Robert Filliou, nationalité poète*, 127–28.
- 65 Paul LaFargue, *The Right to Be Lazy: Essays by Paul LaFargue*, ed. Bernard Marszalek (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2011); Helen Molesworth, “Work Avoidance: The Everyday Life of Marcel Duchamp’s Readymades,” *Art Journal* 57, no. 4 (Winter 1998).
- 66 Kristin Ross, “The Right to Laziness,” in *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 51.
- 67 Hal Foster, *Prosthetic Gods* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 109.
- 68 Hal Foster, “Whatever Happened to Postmodernism?,” in *The Return of the Real: Art and Theory at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 221–22.
- 69 Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, 73.
- 70 Roland Barthes, “Dare to Be Lazy,” *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962–1980*, trans. Linda Coverdale (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 342.
- 71 Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, 16.
- 72 Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, 19.
- 73 Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
- 74 Robert Watts, letter to George Brecht, May 7, 1966, Hanns Sohm Archive.
- 75 Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, 74.
- 76 Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, 199–200.
- 77 Robert Filliou mentions being involved with the group in a letter to Emmett Williams, c. summer 1968, Jean Brown papers. Commenting specifically on the events of May 1968 in light of the time line of his pedagogical workbook, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, drafted mostly in 1967 but not published until 1970, Filliou wrote: “Since then there have been the barricades. I feel no need to change or add to my text, tho’ [sic]. The student’s [sic] unrest was already mine, their revolution my revolution.” Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, 12.
- 78 Robert Filliou, interview with Dieter Roth, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, 152.
- 79 Vautier and Alocco, “A Conversation about Something Else: an Interview with George Brecht,” 67. As Ina Blom has brilliantly made plain, however, Vautier posited self-deflating gestures of his own; see Blom, “Ben Vautier’s Signature Acts and the Heterography of the Avant-Garde,” *Visible Language* 39, no. 3 (2005): 278–307.
- 80 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
- 81 Hannah Arendt, “Culture and Politics,” in *Reflections on Literature and Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 190.
- 82 So argues Richard Halpern in “Theater and Democratic Thought: Arendt to Rancière,” *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 3 (2011): 545–72.
- 83 Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken, 2005), 193, 161. It should be noted that Arendt writes these words with the enduring example of Jewish culture in mind.
- 84 Schmidt and Spoerri, “Filliou is mein großer Bruder, aber ich bin seine Mutter,” 16, translation mine.

- 85 Alison Knowles, letter to George Brecht, c. 1966, Hanns Sohm Archive.
- 86 Huyssen, "Back to the Future: Fluxus in Context," 142.
- 87 Robert Filliou, "Entretien Avec Georg Jappe" (Hamburg, 1984), *Inter: art actuel* 87 (2004): 59.
- 88 George Brecht, letter to George Maciunas, January 11, 1963, Hanns Sohm Archive.
- 89 Brecht's description of the "global aspect" of Fluxus notably resembles the structure of late capitalist empire as described by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). If Hardt and Negri propose that an anti-imperialist political project can be launched only in the same network form as Empire, then the Eternal Network, along with the precariously cohesive Fluxus network, might be considered a formulation of counter-Empire in artistic terms. Following network logics down a different path, David Joselit has provocatively compared the dissemination of Fluxus events and ideas to the circulation of images of "spectacular ethical demonstrations" deployed by radical jihadists and other activists across the ideological spectrum. David Joselit, "The Readymade Metabolized: Fluxus in Life," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 63/64, Wet/Dry (Spring/Autumn 2013): 198.
- 90 Wassily Kandinsky, *Point and Line to Plane*, trans. Howard Dearstyne and Hilla Rebay (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1947), 25, italics mine.
- 91 John Cage, "Interview with Roger Reynolds [and Robert Ashley]" (1962), in *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, ed. Elliott Schwartz, Barney Childs, and Jim Fox (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2009), 346. Such a conception of music, as a fundamentally communitarian activity, prefigures the arguments made by Christopher Small in *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England, 1998).
- 92 Robert Filliou, letter to George Maciunas, May 27, 1970, Hanns Sohm Archive.
- 93 Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation (L'Entretien infini, 1969)*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 70–71.
- 94 Maurice Blanchot, *Friendship (L'Amitié, 1971)*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 291.
- 95 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community (La Communauté désœuvrée, 1986)*, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 31, italics in orig.
- 96 Fittingly, there is not a singular text through which one can understand the interconnected notions of friendship, community without community, and *désœuvrement* articulated by Blanchot and Nancy in response to the work of Georges Bataille. The terms thread through their writings as the coarticulations of a group of interlocutors who were, at least in the case of Blanchot and Bataille, close friends. In addition to the works cited above, see Eleanor Kaufman, *The Delirium of Praise: Bataille, Blanchot, Deleuze, Foucault, Klossowski* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Leslie Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary* (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Leslie Hill, *Bataille, Klossowski, Blanchot: Writing at the Limit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Art-historical engagements with *désœuvrement* that connect with what I am arguing about Fluxus include George Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); and Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964–1976*.
- 97 Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, 31, italics in orig.

- 98 Urs and Rös Graf, “The Agency for Intellectual Guest Labour: Interview with Harald Szeemann” (December 28, 1970), in *Harald Szeemann: Individual Methodology*, ed. Florence Derieux (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2007), 88–89.
- 99 Ad Petersen, *Ad Petersen: Les Mille Lieux de l’Art* (Basel: Museum Tinguely, 2013), 103.
- 100 Robert Filliou, letter to George Maciunas, May 27, 1970, reprinted in *Happening & Fluxus*, ed. Sohm and Szeemann, n.p.
- 101 George Brecht, “An Interview with Robin Page for Carla Liss (Who Fell Asleep),” *Art and Artists* 7, no. 7 (October 1972): 29.
- 102 Armstrong and Rothfuss, *In the Spirit of Fluxus*; Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude*; and Craig Saper, “Fluxus as a Laboratory,” in *The Fluxus Reader*, ed. Ken Friedman (New York: Academy Editions, 1998).
- 103 My characterization of Fluxus as a community without community having produced score-based objects without object (as against accounts of Fluxus as a humorous spirit or attitude) parallels the antagonistic counter-model of relational aesthetics articulated by Claire Bishop (as against accounts of that work which emphasize utopian conviviality). It is worth pointing out this connection given that Fluxus is often cited as a forerunner to more recent relational aesthetics and social practice work. Appropriately, Bishop also turns to Nancy’s *The Inoperative Community*, pointing to the larger field of critics who have engaged his work; Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” *October* 110 (Autumn 2004): 68n47. Further theorizations of communities unworked can be found in Miami Theory Collective, ed., *Community at Loose Ends* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); and Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
- 104 Robert Filliou, letter to Emmett Williams, c. 1965–1968, Emmett Williams file, Jean Brown papers. Filliou’s language proposes a communitarian strategy counterpoised to spectacle in terms similar to that of Guy Debord, who writes in *La société du spectacle* (first published in 1967), “The spectacle thus unites what is separate, but it unites it only in its separateness.” Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone, 1994), 22, italics in orig.

CODA

- 1 Rudolf Frieling, ed., *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, exh. cat. (San Francisco/New York: SFMOMA/Thames & Hudson, 2008).
- 2 “SFMOMA Presents Major Overview of Participation-Based Art,” press release, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, June 15, 2008, <https://www.sfmoma.org/press/release/sfmoma-presents-major-overview-of-participation-b/>, accessed April 17, 2019.
- 3 The term “network mentality” comes from Owen Smith, “Fluxus Praxis: An Exploration of Connections, Creativity, and Community,” in *At a Distance: Precursors to Art and Activism on the Internet*, ed. Annmarie Chandler and Norie Neumark (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 126. See also Craig J. Saper, *Networked Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), xv, 43; Christiane Paul, *Digital Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003); Charlie Gere, “The Digital Avant-Garde,” *Digital Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2008); *Media Art Histories*, ed. Oliver Grau (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); and Tatiana Bazzichelli, *Networking: The Net as Artwork* (Aarhus: Digital Aesthetics Research

Center, 2008). In tandem, there is an active community of internet artists who explicitly identify as latter-generation Fluxus artists.

- 4 Paul, *Digital Art*, 13.
- 5 Co-curated with Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Paul's exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art was titled *Programmed: Rules, Codes, and Choreographies in Art, 1965–2018* (September 28, 2018–April 14, 2019).
- 6 Christiane Paul, "Introduction," *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond: Curatorial Models for Digital Art* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 4.
- 7 Saper, *Networked Art*, xv.
- 8 Smith, "Fluxus Praxis," 136.
- 9 Smith, "Fluxus Praxis," 131.
- 10 Smith, "Fluxus Praxis," 132.
- 11 Smith, "Fluxus Praxis," 128.
- 12 Roger Rothman, "Against Critique: Fluxus and the Hacker Aesthetic," *Modernism/modernity* 22, no. 4 (2015): 787–810.
- 13 George Maciunas, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art" (1962), in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss, exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993), 156–57.
- 14 Dick Higgins, "Something Else about Fluxus," *Art and Artists* 7, no. 7 (October 1972): 17–18.
- 15 Clement Greenberg, "The New Sculpture," in *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 145.
- 16 Rosalind Krauss, "Using Language to Do Business as Usual," in *Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation*, ed. Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey (New York: Polity Press, 1991), 89.
- 17 Maciunas, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art," 157.
- 18 Dick Higgins, *A Dialectic of Centuries: Notes Toward a Theory of the New Arts* (New York: Printed Editions, 1978), 4.
- 19 Dick Higgins, "Intermedia" (1965/6), republished with commentary by Hannah Higgins in *Leonardo* 34, no. 1 (2001): 49–54. See also Higgins, "Statement on Intermedia" (1966), *Dé-coll/age* 6, ed. Wolf Vostell (1967), reprinted in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, 172–73. I deal at greater length with Higgins's notion of intermedia and its relationship to the spectacular and educational initiatives discussed in this chapter in my essay "The Crux of Fluxus: Intermedia, Rear-Guard," in *Arts Expanded (1958–1978)*, ed. Eric Crosby and Liz Glass, vol. 1 of *Living Collections Catalogue* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2014), <https://walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/crux-of-fluxus/>, accessed January 6, 2018.
- 20 Higgins, "Intermedia," 49, 50.
- 21 Higgins, "Intermedia," 52 (see 1981 postscript); Dick Higgins, letter to Tom Fallon, August 11, 1981, Dick Higgins papers, 1960–1994, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, accession no. 870613.
- 22 Critical histories of this vein of intermedia include Branden Joseph, "'My Mind Split Open': Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable," *Grey Room* 8 (Summer 2002): 80–

- 107; and Felicity D. Scott, "Acid Visions," *Grey Room* 23 (Spring 2006): 22–39. See also Elenore Lester's early reports, "So What Happens After Happenings?," *New York Times*, September 4, 1966; and "Intermedia: Tune In, Turn On—and Walk Out?," *New York Times Magazine*, May 12, 1968.
- 23 Gene Youngblood, "The Artist as Ecologist," in *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1970), 348. There are further instances of artists and critics adopting the term "intermedia" early on that I can only list here: from 1967 to 1970, Gene Youngblood wrote a regular "Intermedia" column for the *Los Angeles Free Press*; in 1968, Elaine Summers founded the Experimental Intermedia Foundation to support and promote the work of artists deemed to be working in that mode; and Harvey Lond published an arts magazine titled *InterMedia* from 1974–1979 in Los Angeles. Intermedia also took root internationally with the 1969 Intermedia Art Festival in Tokyo, Intermedia '69 in Heidelberg, Germany, and the founding of Galerie Art Intermedia in Cologne.
- 24 Lev Manovich, "Principles of New Media," *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 27–48.
- 25 Higgins, "Statement on Intermedia," 172, italics mine.
- 26 See Nam June Paik, "TV Bra for Living Sculpture" (1969) and "Interview with Paik" (1975), reproduced in Wulf Herzogenrath, ed., *Nam June Paik Fluxus/Video* (Bremen: Kunsthalle Bremen, 1999), 132.
- 27 David Joselit, *Feedback: Television Against Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 13.
- 28 Nam June Paik, letter to Rolf Jährling, December 22, 1962, cited in Susanne Neuburger, "Terrific Exhibition: 'Time Art' alias Music in the Exhibition Genre," *Nam June Paik: Exposition of Music Electronic Television Revisited* (Köln: Verlag König, 2009), 31; and Nam June Paik, "Afterlude to the EXPOSITION of EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION," *fLuxus cc fiVe ThReE*, no. 4 (June 1964).
- 29 Nam June Paik, "About the Exposition of the Music," *Dé-coll/age* 3 (December 1962).
- 30 Nam June Paik, "Artificial Intelligence vs. Artificial Metabolism" (1982), reproduced in Herzogenrath, ed., *Nam June Paik Fluxus/Video*, 252–53.
- 31 Allan Kaprow, "Nam June Paik" (1968), in Herzogenrath, ed., *Nam June Paik Fluxus/Video*, 124–25.
- 32 John Cage, "Nam June Paik: A Diary" (1965), in *Nam June Paik Fluxus/Video*, 102–3.
- 33 Dick Higgins, "Something Else About Fluxus," 21.
- 34 Nam June Paik, untitled manifesto, in *Manifestos, A Great Bear Pamphlet* (New York: Something Else Press, 1966), 25.
- 35 Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 194.
- 36 See Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1911), 179, 181, 196–97, 257–58.
- 37 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 211. Deleuze engaged Bergson throughout his career, but his two major works that deal with the concept of divergent actualization are *Difference and Repetition* and *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Brooklyn, NY: Zone, 1988). See also Gilles Deleuze, "Bergson's Conception of Difference," in *The New Bergson*, ed. John Mullarkey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). In Branden Joseph's essay "Chance, Indeterminacy, Multiplicity," which draws on Bergson's

virtual-actual dialectic in different ways than does my present argument, he notes that Cage and Deleuze were working through Bergson's ideas at roughly the same moment. See Joseph in Julia Robinson, ed., *The Anarchy of Silence: John Cage and Experimental Art* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2009).

- 38 Boris Groys, "A Genealogy of Participatory Art," in *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, 29.
- 39 Hannah Higgins, "The Computational Word Works of Eric Andersen and Dick Higgins," in *Mainframe Experimentalism: Early Computing and the Foundations of the Digital Arts*, ed. Hannah Higgins and Douglas Kahn (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 283, 279.
- 40 Nicole L. Woods, "Object/Poems: Alison Knowles's Feminist Archite(x)ture," *X-TRA* 15, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 6–25.
- 41 Higgins and Kahn, "Introduction," in *Mainframe Experimentalism*, 12.
- 42 According to new media curator Christiane Paul, "All the networked art forms from the 60s onwards—Fluxus and mail art, projects using fax machines and Minitel—can be seen as proto-post-internet in that they used networks or network technologies for creating work that would take physical, embodied form." Paul, quoted in Paddy Johnson, "Finally, a Semi-Definitive Definition of Post-Internet Art," *Art F City*, October 14, 2014, <http://artfcity.com/2014/10/14/finally-a-semi-definitive-definition-of-post-internet-art/>, accessed December 23, 2017.
- 43 Other alternative accounts to new media framings of Fluxus include Anthony Huberman, "Talent Is Overrated," *Artforum* 48, no. 3 (2009): 109–10; Martin Patrick, "Unfinished Filliou: On the Fluxus Ethos and the Origins of Relational Aesthetics," *Art Journal* 69, no. 1–2 (2010): 44–61; and Bertrand Clavez, "Fluxus: Reference or Paradigm for Contemporary Art?," *Visible Language* 39, no. 3 (2005).
- 44 UploadDownloadPerform.net was founded by Adam Overton in 2008 and went offline in 2014. <http://uploaddownloadperform.net/>, accessed August 21, 2014. Now offline, partial captures of the site are available via <http://web.archive.org>.
- 45 David Horvitz uses the internet and a personal e-mail list to advertise and sell works and projects related to highly localized gestures and performances. For example, for his work #VadeMecum (5992. *I will, with Pleasure, Take Letters for You*), commissioned by Creative Time in 2011, Horvitz invited the public to submit Twitter messages, which he wrote out by hand and personally couriered from San Francisco to Washington, DC, following the route of the first transcontinental telegram; see <http://creativetime.org/programs/archive/2011/tweets/?p=118> and <http://davidhorvitz.com/>, accessed August 21, 2014.

INDEX

Page numbers in italics indicate figures.

- 4'33" (Cage), 30, 33, 48–50, 68–69, 102, 210
- absolute music, 31–32
- abstract expressionism, 14, 20–21, 29, 46, 109, 116, 232n33, 242n1, 244n30, plates 2–3; Fluxus responses to, 71–99; gesture painting, 21, 44, 89, 94–95; lyrical abstraction, 95. *See also* action painting; Motherwell, Robert; New York School; Ossorio, Alfonso; Pollock, Jackson
- abstraction, 39, 43, 44, 47, 51–53, 63, 89, 92–93, 95, 116, 120, 130, 213, 222, 247n1, plates 1–3; vs. concretism / the concrete, 103, 106, 128–32; and the diagram, 51–53; and graphic notation, 53, 61. *See also* abstract expressionism
- action painting: Kaprow on, 83. *See also* abstract expressionism; Pollock, Jackson; Rosenberg, Harold
- Adorno, Theodor: on music as relational, 50
- AG Gallery, 15–16, 88–94, 98, 127, 146, 174
- Akasegawa, Gempei, 253n14
- Albers, Josef, 120
- allographic, 20, 29, 59, 105, 148, 163, 112, 163, 249n29; vs. autographic (Goodman), 59; Fluxus objects as, 137–43. *See also* autographic
- Alloway, Lawrence: and *The Art of Assemblage* exhibition and panel discussion, 14, 133
- ambiguity, 29; and Brecht, 102; and Brown, 21, 53–56, 61–62, 142; and Cage, 40–41, 56; “fatal ambiguity,” 82; and Feldman, 38; vs. indeterminacy, 53–64
- anality, 157, 166; the anal stage, 158. *See also* asshole; body, the; holes; orality; shit
- anthologies: *Anthology of Chance Operations, An* (Young), 9, 15, 27, 38, 67, 127, 128, 138–39; “Anthology of Misunderstandings” (Filliou/Brecht), 182; *Fluxkit* (1965), 98, 150–51, 160, plate 7; *Fluxus 1* (1964–1965), 135, 136, 137–40, 145, 148, 160, 253n14, plate 6; *Flux Year Box 2* (1967), 151, 153, 160, plate 8; *Notations* (1969), 67; *Water Yam* (Maciunas/Brecht), 9, 10, 27–28, 100, 110, 113, 129, 230n12
- Anthology of Chance Operations, An* (Young), 9, 15, 27, 38, 67, 127, 128, 138–39
- arbitrariness: and the drip, 82; vs. fine art, 82; and work realization, 7
- Arendt, Hannah, 174; on labor, work, and action, 197–200, 205
- Arman: accumulations of, 200, 256n52; and the Cédille, 191, 193
- Arp, Jean, 95
- art: anti-, 19, 213; as an “automatic machine” (Maciunas), 18, 93–94, 131, 214, 220; “cybernated art” (Paik), 220; “idea art,” 195; imitating nature, 33, 59, 93–94; as a network, 202; and politics, 197; “programmed,” 211; as seeping/dissolving into life, 15, 163, 218. *See also* kinetic art; Pop art
- Art of Assemblage, The* (exhibition and panel discussion), 118–19, 185; and the first mention of “Fluxus,” 14–15
- art history (and art-historical), 19–20, 29, 34, 39, 50, 58, 63, 94, 97, 117, 128, 145, 155–56, 194, 209–14, 233n43, 237n61, 242n158
- Art of Participation, The: 1950 to Now*, 209–11, 221–22
- Ashley, Robert: on the experimental logic of Cage et al., 203
- Ashton, Dore: on Cage’s scoring practice, 47; on the paintings of Gutai, 83
- assemblage, 14, 18, 105, 109, 143–44, 178, 186, 192, 203, 216; as 1960s object model, 118–24. *See also* *Art of Assemblage, The* (exhibition and panel discussion); Brecht: object-arrangements of
- asshole, 155; the archway as architectural asshole, 182; Canal Street as the “asshole” of New York, 144; as used in Maciunas’s imagery, 153. *See also* anality; body, the; holes; shit
- authorship, 7, 207; disavowal of, 74, 148, 166, 170;

- "distributed" (Piekut), 143; the ethical obligation to claim individual (for Saito), 170; trans-subjective, 164
- autographic, 15, 29, 59–60, 80–83, 99, 142, 148; vs. allographic (Goodman), 59. *See also* allographic automatism; Brecht and, 62–63, 80; Fluxus artwork as "automatic machine," 18, 93–94, 131, 214, 220; the Gutai group and, 83; Pollock and, 81; Surrealist, 63, 79, 94
- avant-garde, 23, 25, 46, 49, 51, 58, 70, 80, 94, 104, 115, 137, 147, 159, 161, 178, 180, 182, 184, 192, 201–2, 231n21, 240n10. *See also* neo-avant-garde
- Ay-O, 23; and the Cédille, 193; and concrete painting, 156; *Finger Boxes*, 151, 155; *Finger Holes*, 138, 155–56; as photographed by Maciunas, 164–65, 176; *Tactile Boxes*, 165
- Baker, George, 263n96; on Dadaist manipulations of transparency, 51
- Banes, Sally: on the Reuben Gallery, 109
- Barthes, Roland: on work and worth/identity, 195
- Bataille, Eugène, 180
- Bataille, Georges: dialogue with Nancy and Blanchot, 263n96
- Baudrillard, Jean: *The System of Objects* (1968), 117
- Bauermeister, Mary, 16, 95
- Bauhaus, 38, 66, 171
- Bergson, Henri, 77, 266n37; on the relationship of possible to real, 220; on the seeming chaos of nature, 86
- Bernes, Jasper, 183
- Bersani, Leo, 257n74
- Bertini, Gianni: and Filliou's *Poème invalide*, 188, 189
- Beuys, Joseph, 166; and the 1963 Fluxus tour, 3
- Black Mountain College, 34, 38, 107, 120, 171
- Blanchot, Maurice: on companions and distance/separation, 204; on *désœuvrement* (unworking, idleness), 24, 174, 204–5; dialogue with Bataille and Nancy, 263n96
- blankness: a blank card as an event (Brecht), 110; "blank form" (Morris), 22, 55, 104, 127–29, 131; "blank image" (Higgins), 22, 104, 131; "blank structure" (Higgins), 131; fill-in-the-blank scores (of *The Mystery Game I–V*), 203, 204; Rauschenberg's *White Paintings*, 49
- Block, René: on the multiple, 147
- body, the: actions/noises of (in Maciunas's work), 66, 153; of the computer user, 221; excretion, 153, 157; Fluxboxes and, 153–60; holes of, 151, 166; and the infant, 157; leavings (hair, nails, shavings, etc.) of, 156; limitations of, 67; and modern sculpture, 154; in Sehgal's work, 223; and technology, 219. *See also* anality; asshole; holes; orality; piss; shit
- Bois, Yve-Alain: on the "entropic equalization of all things" (and assemblage work), 119
- Bonds, Mark Evan: on absolute music, 31
- book, 72, 107, 110, 115, 135, 137–39, 148, 150–51, 155, 183, 185, 191, 193, 215–16, 255n39, 255n45; artists' books, 67, 192, 202, 253n14; Brecht's notebooks, 4, 10, 27, 36, 54, 63, 74, 87, 102, 104, 106, 114, 118, 123–24, 126, 193, 229n4; the Cédille as bookshop, 174, 180, 182; Feldman's notebook, 38, 41; flip-books, 138; Fluxus book-objects and book-boxes, 135, 137, 185
- Boorstin, Daniel J.: on the "pseudo-event," 117
- Boulez, Pierre, 40, 63; on Feldman's graph pieces, 45; on open form in music, 43; *Third Piano Sonata* (1955–1957/63), 43
- Brancusi, Constantin, 154
- Braun, Hermann: on Brecht's view of correlations as event, 129
- Brecht, George, 1–23, 26–28, 55, 59–67, 70–99, 101–35, 138, 140, 142, 144, 151–52, 164, 170–77, 180–207, 216, 220; 3 *Table and Chair Events* (1962), 122–23; anti-egotism of, 196; and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116, 122; and *The Art of Assemblage* exhibition and panel discussion, 118; on artist mistreatment (by dealers), 184, 192; and automatism, 62–63, 80; on Brown's ambiguity, 60–62; *Burette Music* (1959), 4–5, 106; *The Cabinet*, 110, 113, 120, 124; and Cage, 7–9, 15, 46–47, 54, 60–64, 73, 75, 79–80, 82–83, 86–87, 102, 104–7, 109–10, 125, 229n4; *Candle-Piece for Radios* (1959), 15, 86, 106–7; *Card-Piece for Voice* (1959), 15; *The Case*, 110–11, 114, 119, 121, 124, 144, plate 4; and chairs, 116, 120–23, 128; "Chance-Imagery," 21, 62–63, 74, 78–83, 87, 90, 93, 96; *Chance Paintings*, 11, 21, 76–78, 86–87, 92, 110, plate 1; *Closed on Mondays* (1969), 140, 175, 177, 258n19; *Cloud Scissors* (1964), 180; *Comb Music (Comb Event)* (1959–1962), 16; on copyright, 170; day job of (as chemist), 10–11, 71–72, 78, 80–82, 110; *Direction* (1963), 135; *The Dome (Redemption Dome)*, 110, 112–13, 119, 124; *Drip Music (Drip Event)* (1959–1962), 1–6, 10–14, 16, 18, 21, 26–27, 59, 65, 73, 87, 106, 113, 132; *Event Score* (1965), 103; and the event score, 27–28, 55, 87–88, 101–6, 129, 131, 134, 220; *Exercise* (1963), 100, 103–4; and Filliou, 180–85, 187–204; and form, 63–64; *Gossoon* (with Waring), 126; *Incidental Music* (1961), 85, 86; on indeterminacy vs. ambiguity, 61; on interpretation of his scores, 4; and Kaprow (his carpool buddy), 82, 109, 244n35; *Motor Vehicle Sundown (Event)* (1960), 9, 101, 111, 129; *The Mystery Game I–V*, 203–4; and the Non-École of Villefranche (Non-School of Villefranche), 196–98; and the notational object, 101–132, 151; object-arrangements of, 109–115, 129, 131, plates 4–5; and Ono's Chambers Street loft performance series, 125; paintings of, 11, 21, 74–78, 86–87, 92, 99, 110, plate 1; on the "person" as approximate construction, 164; *Piano Piece, 1962* (1962), 123; and Pollock, 10–11, 63, 71–76, 79–82, 87, 96; on public engagement, 121–24; "raining" and "pissing" event score (c. 1962), 10; and Rauschenberg, 114, 119–23; *Repository* (1961), 118–19, 121–22, 144, 249n27, plate 5; *Solitaire*, 110, 113; *Solo for Violin* (1962), 175; on Stockhausen's work, 61; "stolen art time-space event," 202; on Stünke, 184; *Three Aqueous Events* (1961), 10; *Three Chair Events* (1961), 122–23; *Three Dances* (1961), 10; *Time-Table Music* (1959), 102; and the *toward events*: an arrangement exhibition, 109–10, 114, 127; *Two Definitions* (1963), 113; *Two Exercises* (1961), 100, 103–4; and Vautier, 196; *Water Yam* (1963), 9, 10, 27–28, 100, 110, 113, 129, 230n12; *Word Event* (1961), 102. *See also* Cédille, the (La Cédille qui Sourit); event score
- Breder, Hans: and intermedia, 215
- Breer, Robert: and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116
- Bremer, Claus, 16
- Breton, André: 1947 international Surrealist exhibition, 115; and the "crisis of the object," 14; Higgins's critique of, 171; notion of the marvelous, 63; object-poems of, 185
- Brewer, Donna Jo, 181–82, 190–91
- Brockman, John: and the Intermedia '68 festival, 215
- Brown, Earle, 63–64; and the AG Gallery, 16; and ambiguity, 21, 53–56, 61–62, 142; and Cage, 30, 56; *Calder Piece* (1966), 55; on compositional ownership, 62; *December 1952* (1952), 16, 38–40, 45, 50, 54–56, 60–62, 139; *Four Systems* (1954), 60–61; and the grid, 43–44; *November 1952* ("Synergy"), 38, 62; *October 1952*, 38; and the Schillinger technique, 39; *Twenty-Five Pages* (1953), 43, 54
- Brown, Jean, 186
- Brown, Trisha: and Forti's *Dance Constructions*, 126; and the Intermedia '68 festival, 215
- Buchloh, Benjamin: on accumulation and fetishization, 256n52; on Fluxboxes, 155; on the sculptural object and the power of sign exchange value, 154; on Warhol's *Dance Diagrams* and *Do It Yourself* paintings, 120; on Watts, 155

- Buckingham, Matthew: on the (foul) early history of Canal Street, 254n27
- Bürger, Peter, 231n21
- Burnham, Jack: on modern sculpture, 154
- Bussotti, Sylvano: *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor* (1959), 45, 78
- Byrd, Joseph: and the AG Gallery, 88; and Brown's *December 1952*, 16; and Ono's Chambers Street loft performance series, 125
- café geniuses, 181, 194–97, 201–2. *See also* Filliou, Robert; idleness
- Cage, John, 20, 30–36, 53, 65, 83–87, 142–43, 183, 203, 220; *o'oo"* (aka *4'33"* [No. 2]) (1962), 68–69; *4'33"* (1952), 30, 33, 48–50, 68–69, 102, 210; and the AG Gallery, 16, 88; on ambiguous notation, 40–41, 56; *Aria* (1958), 48; on arrangement and control, 109; and Brecht, 7–9, 15, 46–47, 54, 60–64, 73, 75, 79–80, 82–83, 86–87, 102, 104–7, 109–10, 125, 229n4; and Brown, 30, 56; and chance/indeterminacy, 9, 21, 30, 33, 40–41, 43, 47, 54–64, 68, 83–86, 95, 104, 107, 139, 142–43, 234n20; *Chess Pieces* (c. 1944), 40; and clock time, 245n46; and "A Concert of New Music," 15; *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1957–1958), 41, 45–47, 56, 58–59, 61; *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Chamber Orchestra* (1950–1951), 40; at Darmstadt (1958), 61; and the Eighth Street Artists Club, 95; experimental composition course at the New School for Social Research, 7–9, 11, 15, 22, 28–30, 36, 46, 50, 54, 60, 63–64, 66, 86, 88, 102, 104, 106–7, 109–10, 114, 125, 229n4, 230n8; "Experimental Music," 33; and Feldman, 30, 36–37, 41, 45; on form, 107, 113; "The Future of Music: Credo" (1937), 32; and the grid, 40–44, 56; and the *I Ching*, 41, 54, 84; *Music for Carillon No. 1* (1952), 41–42, 50; *Music of Changes* (1951), 41, 84; *Music for Piano* (1952–1956), 42; on notation, 32–33, 36, 40; *Notations* (1969), 67; and Ono's Chambers Street loft performance series, 125; on Paik's work, 219–20; and painters, 35, 42, 47; and percussion and idiophones, 83–84, 86, 107; and prepared piano, 84, 88, 107–8, 139, 218; *Quartet* (1935), 84, 107; and Rauschenberg, 35, 46–47, 49, 119; on the score, 32; *Seven Haiku* (1952), 46; *Sonatas and Interludes* (1948), 107–8, 139; *Theater Piece No. 1* (1952), 34; and Tudor, 16, 36, 57, 62–63, 68, 75, 143; and Varèse, 38; *Variations* series, 21, 57–62, 110, 139; *Water Music* (1952), 41, 46, 48, 108; *Water Walk* (1959), 48; *Williams Mix* (1952), 33; on Young's music, 125
- Calas, Nicolas and Elena: *Hard Center* exhibition, 116
- Calder, Alexander: and Brown, 55
- Cale, John: and *Flux Year Box 2*, 153
- Canal Street, 144–46, 148, 165, 219, 254n27, 258n19; Fluxhall/Fluxshop at 359 Canal Street, 5, 143–44, 175, 202
- Cardew, Cornelius: and the Cédille, 193; on graphic notation, 240n110
- Caspari, Arthus, 17
- Cassirer, Ernst: Brecht and, 114
- catastrophe: as impossible (for Brecht), 12; and indeterminate music (for Feldman), 60
- cedilla, 174, 185–91, 194, 197–98, 203–4, plate 12. *See also* Cédille, the (La Cédille qui Sourit)
- Cédille, the (La Cédille qui Sourit), 23–24, 172, 180–207; *Games at the Cedilla, or the Cedilla Takes Off*, 192–93, 203, 204, 260n35, plate 12. *See also* Brecht, George; Filliou, Robert
- César, 200
- Charles, Daniel: on Goodman's use of the score to protect the work against identity-loss, 59; on indeterminate vs. ambiguous compositions, 54
- Chat Noir cabaret, 180
- child's play, 156–57, 160
- Christo, 200
- cinema: expanded, 215; flip-books (as "poor man's films"), 138; Maciunas's unrealized film, 99; and touch (in *Flux Year Box 2*), 153
- Clark, Lygia: *Dialogue: Goggles* (1968), 210
- Cline, David: on Feldman's influence on Cage, 41
- Coleman, Ornette: and Artist House (331 Prince Street), 258n19
- collaboration/collective production, 7, 14–15, 18, 23, 30, 62, 70, 77, 96, 108, 125, 135, 138–43, 162–63, 166–67, 170, 174–75, 180
- commodity, 133–68; dysfunctional, 212; "egalitarian," 25; fetish of the, 25, 154; transitional, 23, 137, 159–61. *See also* fetish/fetishism; Fluxboxes; object
- community: without community, 23–24, 174, 204, 264n103; and death, 205; and unworking, 205, 207. *See also* Cédille, the (La Cédille qui Sourit); Eternal Network, the
- Composition 1960 #10 (to Bob Morris)* (Young), 6, 13, 97, 143, 230n11
- conceptual art, 105, 131, 167, 210, 214; conceptualism, 24; "conceptual turn," 19
- concrete poetry, 15–16, 29, 156
- concretism, 16, 22, 39, 42, 50, 93–94, 129–32, 246n60, 252n87
- Constructivism, 43, 135–37, 161; and Brown, 39; and "collective social objects," 137; and Lissitzky, 39–40
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda K.: and Cage, 86
- copyright (and permission, plagiarism), 140, 170
- Cornell, Joseph, 103, 111, 249n27
- Corner, Philip: and Brown's *December 1952*, 16; *Piano Activities* (1962), 13, 108–9
- Cowell, Henry: "string piano" techniques of, 107–8
- Craft, Catherine: on the relationship between abstract expressionism and Dada, 95
- Cubism, 14, 43, 51, 70, 14, 120, 217; and the object, 250n53
- Dada: and bureaucracy, 172; and chance, 11; diagrams of, 51, 53, 70; and the manicule, 188; mechanomorphs, 20; and modernism, 73, 97; and the object, 14, 160; poetry, 79; and transparency, 51–52, 58. *See also* Duchamp, Marcel; neo-dada; readymade, the
- Damisch, Hubert, 242n58
- dance, 10, 15, 20, 48, 55, 83–84, 87, 107, 120, 124, 126, 180, 219
- Darboven, Hanne: and the *Drawing Now: 1955–1975* exhibition, 45
- Dargis, Alfonsas, 92
- Davis, Angela: Filliou's support of, 193
- de Antonio, Emile: and Cage, 46
- death: of Maciunas, 162, 163, 205; and unproductivity, 24
- Debord, Guy, 207; *The Society of the Spectacle*, 117, 264n104
- December 1952* (1952) (Brown), 16, 38–40, 45, 50, 54–56, 60–62, 139
- de Kooning, Willem, 35
- De Landa, Manuel: on Deleuze's diagram, 78; on matter, for Deleuze, 77
- Deleuze, Gilles, 21, 77–78, 220–21; on "abstract machines," 77; and Bergson, 266n37; on matter and matter-function, 74, 77
- De Maria, Walter, 128, 130: and the AG Gallery, 16, 88; *Boxes for Meaningless Work* (1961), 55, 127; and the *Hard Center* exhibition, 116; and industrial fabrication methods, 146; and Ono's Chambers Street loft performance series, 125
- dematerialization, 70, 105, 131, 158, 167, 196, 212–14, 218, 221
- Depero, Fortunato: *Depero Futurista* (1927), 253n14
- de Ridder, Willem, 146; European Mail-Order Warehouse, 141, 172, 174
- De Stijl, 43, 130
- Dewey, Ken: and the Intermedia '68 festival, 215
- de Zayas, Marius: and the diagrammatic, 51
- de Zegher, Catherine: on delineation and form in drawing, 50
- diagram/diagrammatic, the, 20–22, 44–54, 58, 60–61,

- 64–70, 73–74, 77–78, 103, 124, 129–31, 151, 157, 159, 190, 201, 203, 221; art history of, 51–55, 58, 70, 238n91; and diagrammatology, 52, 239n95; as “operational icon” (Stjernfelt), 52; and painting, 77–78
- Dine, Jim: and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116; and the *toward events: an arrangement* exhibition, 109, 114
- disappointment: calculated/cultivated (and Fluxus), 25, 138, 159–60; with public engagement in works (Brecht), 121–24
- drawing, 20, 80, 89, 96, 147; *Composition 1960 #10 (to Bob Morris)* (Young), 6, 13, 97, 143, 230n11; as compositional method, 35, 42, 44–53, 57, 76; and Stockhausen, 237n68
- Drip Music (Drip Event)* (Brecht), 1–6, 10–14, 16, 18, 21, 26–27, 59, 65, 73, 87, 106, 113, 132; Brecht performance of, 3–4; and *Burette Music*, 4–5, 106; conventionalization of (and Brecht’s response), 3–4. *See also* Brecht, George
- Duchamp, Marcel, 104, 159; and *The Art of Assemblage* exhibition and panel discussion, 14, 133; *Boîte-en-Valise* (1935–1941), 115; *Green Box* (1934), 110, 253n14; and the idea of the original, 148; irony of, 63; *Large Glass* (1915–1923), 51, 194; as lazy, 194; *Prière de Toucher (Please Touch)* (1947), 115; readymades of, 9, 113, 115, 147–48, 154, 183, 200; *Some French Moderns Says McBride* (1922), 253n14; on the underground artist, 174
- Dufrène, François: and the Cédille’s gifting project, 191
- Dunn, Robert: and Young, 125
- Eisenhauer, Lette: as photographed by Maciunas, 176
- electronic music, 15–16, 31, 33–34
- Esman, Rosa: and Multiples Inc., 146
- Eternal Network, the, 174, 198–203, 212, 263n89. *See also* Filliou, Robert
- ethics: Filliou’s, 23, 190, 197; obligation to claim individual authorship (for Saito), 170
- event score, 1–12, 18–22, 26–29, 47, 55, 64–65, 69–74, 78, 87–88, 101–6, 110–11, 124, 128, 131–39, 155, 157, 170, 201, 214, 221; as anti-technology, 220; Brecht’s *Event Score*, 102–3; development of, 7–10; and form, 19, 70, 157; iterativity of, 4, 7, 12, 20, 22, 24, 26; precise imprecision of, 1–3; as “temporal readymades” (Maciunas), 9, 87, 230n10
- exemplativism, 7, 22, 104. *See also* Higgins, Dick
- Fahlström, Oyvind: and the Cédille, 193
- failure, 260n38; of the Cédille (as deliberate), 183, 200; and creativity (for Filliou and Brecht), 194–95; Filliou’s manifesto as an homage to, 196; of the New York Fluxshop, 146
- Feelisch, Wolfgang, 5, 200; on the multiple, 147; and Ute Feelisch, 200
- Feigen, Richard: and the multiple, 146
- Feldman, Morton, 20, 63; and Cage, 30, 36–37, 41, 45; and the Eighth Street Artists Club, 35, 38; on graphic notation, 35–38, 42–45, 53; and the grid, 36–38, 43–44; on indeterminate music, 60; *Intersections* series (1950–1953), 33, 37; and painters, 35, 42, 44–45; and pen choice, 47; *Projections* series (1950–1951), 35–37, 50; and Varèse, 38; and Wolpe, 38
- feminism: feminist critiques of Fluxus, 171, 181, 258n7
- fetish/fetishism, 155–57, 160; and the artwork, 106, 128, 156, 195; and the body, 156; commodity fetish, 25, 154, 222; and Fluxus (for Higgins), 97, 213; and graphic notation (for Stockhausen), 45; and sculpture, 256n52; and the sign, 154–55. *See also* commodity; object
- Ffarrabas, Nye: use of chairs, 250n50
- Filliou, Robert, 17, 23, 172–207; on art (anything as), 202; and Brecht, 180–85, 187–204; and the “café genius,” 181, 194–97, 201–2; on devaluing value, 196; and distribution, 185–87; and failure, 194–96; and the “Festival of Misfits” (1962), 25, 173; *Fluxdust* (c. 1966–1968), 153; *Fluxhair* (c. 1966–1968), 153, 156; and friendship, 190; and the F.T.P., 173; and the *fumistes*, 178–80, 194; *Galerie Légitime*, 177–78; gifting project of the Cédille, 191, 197–98, plate 12; *The Mystery Game I–V*, 203–4; and the Non-École of Villefranche (Non-School of Villefranche), 196–98; *Object Without Object* (1969), 170, 200–202; objects without object, 23, 169–70, 172, 174, 198, 201; “One-Minute Scenarios,” 182, 192; “Partnership Piece” (for Brecht), 180–81, 188; and permanent creation, 182, 190–91, 197–98, 204; *Permanent Creation Toolbox no. 2* (1969), 190–91; *Poème invalide* (1965), 188–90, 194; “Poetical Economy: Towards a New Standard of Value,” 193–96; and the public launch of Fluxus, 2–3; and the rooftop, 178, 179; suspense poems, 23, 178, 185–91, 197–98, 200, 215–17. *See also* Cédille, the (La Cédille qui Sourit); Eternal Network, the
- Flavin, Dan: and the *Drawing Now: 1955–1975* exhibition, 45
- flux: “artwork in flux,” 7, 12, 18–19, 25, 131, 214; as bodily excretion, 153; as continuous movement and change, 7; as the destabilization of subjectivity, 162; as the rate of liquid flow, 4–5, 80
- Fluxboxes, 18, 20, 22–23, 104–5, 110, 137–68, 174, 217; as appealing best to children and experts, 161; and disappointment, 159–60; within Fluxboxes, 150–51; horizontality of, 158; Maciunas’s coffin as, 163; prototypes of, 140–43. *See also* commodity; multiple, the; object; touch
- Flux Holes* (Vautier), 22, 140, 151, 153, 155–57, 159, 191. *See also* holes; Vautier, Ben
- Fluxkit* (1965), 98, 150–51, 160, plate 7. *See also* anthologies
- Fluxus 1* (1964–1965), 135, 136, 137–40, 145, 148, 160, 253n14, plate 6. *See also* anthologies
- Fluxus artists: as “crazies,” 13; as “misfits,” 25, 173, 177; as noticers, 102, 209
- Fluxus newspaper: a *V TRE EXTRA*, 162; cc *Valise e TRANGLE*, 189; cc *V TRE*, 151, 152
- Flux Year Box 2* (1967), 151, 153, 160, plate 8. *See also* anthologies
- Flynt, Henry, 130; on Maciunas’s reluctance to join the avant-garde scene, 88, 94; and Ono’s Chambers Street loft performance series, 125
- Focillon, Henri: on accidents (quoted by Motherwell), 95
- Fontana, Lucio, 200
- form: “blank,” 22, 55, 127–29, 131; for Cage, 107, 113; “conceived in terms of a continuity of various weights” (Cage on Feldman’s graph pieces), 37; as created independently of the artist/composer (Maciunas), 18; and delineation, 50; as diagrammatic, 53, 73, 131, 157, 221; dispossession of, 59–62, 82; and the event score, 19, 70, 157; and Gutai, 83; immanent/ending (for Brecht), 63–64, 87, 124; and materiality, 19; and matter, 77, 79; and nature, 74; as a process, 7, 73–74; significant, 63–64; traveling, 12; without absolute form (Brecht), 124, 128–29. *See also* open form
- Forti, Simone: and Brown’s *December 1952*, 16; *Dance Constructions* (1960–61), 55, 126–27; and Ono’s Chambers Street loft performance series, 125–26; and the *toward events: an arrangement* exhibition, 109–10
- Foster, Hal: on the “double logic of the prosthesis,” 194
- Fourier, Charles: Filliou and, 173
- Frankenthaler, Helen, 76, 96
- Fresh Goods from the East* (1964), 148, 151
- Freud, Sigmund, 160, 166
- Fried, Michael: “Art and Objecthood” (1967), 128
- Friedman, Ken: *Flux Clippings* (1967), 156; *Flux Corsage* (1966), 151–53
- Frieling, Rudolf: and the exhibition *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, 209–211; on the “internet mindset,” 210

- Fuller, Buckminster: as inspiration for Brown, 55
fumisme, 178–80, 194
- Garcia, Mario, 46–47
- gesture painting, 21, 44, 89, 94–95. *See also* abstract expressionism; Pollock, Jackson
- gift: the Cédille's gifting project, 191, 197–98, plate 12; the Fluxus hole as, 166, 198; *Make 300 holes with any implement: This is my gift* (Saito), 166–67
- Goehr, Lydia: on the dependence between work and performance, 54; on the emergence of an “imaginary museum of musical works,” 67; on the nineteenth-century musical work, 30–31
- Goldwater, Robert: and Maciunas, 94
- Gonzalez-Torres, Felix: posters (1992–1993), 210
- Goodman, Marian: on the multiple and as founder of Multiples Inc., 146–47
- Goodman, Nelson: on Cage's indeterminate works, 58–59; on the necessity of score-compliance, 32, 58–59
- Goodman, Paul: on Johnson's Great Society, 192
- Gottlieb, Adolf, 94
- Goux, Jean-Joseph, 158
- Gradenwitz, Peter: on the extreme level of detail in twentieth-century musical scores, 31–32; on “failed” works saved by virtuosic performers, 237n73
- Graham, Robert: and the multiple, 146
- Great Society, the, 192
- Greenberg, Clement: on Pollock's drip pictures, 82; on the successful modernist artwork, 214; theory of disembodied opticality, 95
- grid, the, 20, 36–44, 56, 65–66, 118, 150, 163
- Grooms, Red: and the *toward events: an arrangement* exhibition, 109, 114
- Groys, Boris: on the body of the computer user, 221; and the exhibition *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, 209–210, 221
- Guattari, Félix: on “abstract machines,” 77, 243n20
- Guston, Philip: and Feldman, 35
- Gutai group, 83, 96
- Hansen, Al, 130; and Cage, 9, 86, 230; and the “stolen art time-space event,” 202; and the *toward events: an arrangement* exhibition, 109–10
- Happenings, 14–15, 21, 28, 34, 66, 114, 130, 159, 206–7, 214–15, 217; Cage's *Theater Piece No. 1* as first, 34; and Fluxus, 205–7; *Happening & Fluxus* exhibition, 205–6, 206; Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, 109
- Hartung, Hans, 94
- Heflin, Lee: Implosions, Inc., 255n32
- Heisenberg, Werner, 79
- Hellstein, Valerie: on abstract expressionism, 95
- Higgins, Dick, 130; and the AG Gallery, 16, 88; on authorship, 166; and “blank image,” 22, 104, 131; “blank structure” (in contrast to Morris's “blank form”), 131; and the body, 221; and Brecht's *Drip Music*, 2, 3, 6; and Cage, 9, 36, 66, 86; and the Cédille, 193; on concrete art, 130; and Corner's *Piano Activities*, 13, 108–9; on exemplativism (in Fluxus), 7, 22, 104; “Exemplativist Manifesto,” 7, 8, 131; expulsion from Fluxus, 166, 171; on Fluxus and abstract expressionism, 97; on Fluxus artists, 164, 166, 172, 213; on Fluxus and perpetual change, 140; on Fluxus and reality, 214; on Fluxus and technology, 220; *Graphis 82* (1960), 66–67; “Intermedia” (1965/66) and “Statement on Intermedia” (1966), 117–18, 214–15, 217; and the Intermedia '68 festival, 215; *Intermedial Object #1* (1966), 216; on Maciunas's reduction of Fluxus to a “personal fief,” 171; and Ono's Chambers Street loft performance series, 125; as photographed by Maciunas, 176; and the public launch of Fluxus, 2–3, 13, 108; Something Else Press, 67, 87, 166, 171, 183–84, 192, 261n49; “stolen art time-space event,” 202. *See also* intermedia
- Higgins, Hannah: on the “flexible nominalism” of Fluxus practice, 143; on Fluxus's cognitive model, 164; on Fluxus as “computer art” of the human kind, 221; on Knowles's *The House of Dust*, 221–22
- holes, 20, 22–23, 41, 106, 138–40, 151, 153–59, 164–67, 174, 177, 191, 198, 202, 254n27. *See also* anality; asshole; body, the; *Flux Holes* (Vautier); orality
- hooks, 118, 178, 186–87, 190–91, 194, 200–204. *See also* cédilla; *Object Without Object* (Filliou)
- Horvitz, David, 223, 267n45
- Huelsenbeck, Richard: and *The Art of Assemblage* exhibition and panel discussion, 14, 133
- Hultén, Pontus: on Rauschenberg's *Black Market*, 122
- humor: base, 153, 159; black (of the *fumistes*), 180; and the Cédille, 182, 192; comic seriousness, 3; in Morris's *L-Beams*, 128; perverse (Maciunas's), 156; toilet/bathroom, 173, 192, 25
- Husserl, Edmund, 120
- Huyssen, Andreas: on Fluxus's emphasis on redoing everything in its own name, 171; on Fluxus as the “master-code of postmodernism,” 25, 202; on Fluxus and music, 28
- Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings* (Maciunas), 12, 21, 78, 89–92, 94, 96, 98–99. *See also* Maciunas, George
- Iannone, Dorothy: and the Cédille, 193
- Ichiyanagi, Toshi, 246n54; and the AG Gallery, 16, 88; as dedicatee of Cage's *o'oo'*, 68
- idleness, 24, 194–95, 204–5. *See also* café geniuses; Filliou, Robert
- industry/industrial production/industrialization, 51, 140, 146, 158, 173, 180, 182, 195, 213, 220; deindustrialization, 183
- intermedia, 117–18, 214–15, 217, 266n23. *See also* Higgins, Dick
- Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (IFNM), 16, 34, 45, 50, 60–61, 139
- internet, 24, 210–11, 222–23
- Jährling, Rolf and Annelise, 16
- Jameson, Fredric, 233n43
- Jennings, Terry: and Brown's *December 1952*, 16
- Johns, Jasper, 115; and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116; Brecht and, 114, 119–20; and Cage, 35, 46; “device paintings” of, 119; and the *Drawing Now: 1955–1975* exhibition, 45; and the grid, 43; *Painted Bronze (Ale Cans)* (1960), 150; sculpted flashlights and lightbulbs of, 114, 116; and waste, 213
- Johnson, Ray, 130; and the AG Gallery, 88; and the *toward events: an arrangement* exhibition, 109–110
- Jones, Joe: and Brown, 55; and Filliou, 190, 193, plate 11; kinetic, self-playing mechanical instruments of, 215
- Joselit, David: on the diagrammatic for Dada artists, 51; on the diagram's “semiotic” nature, 53, 70; on the “object of spectatorship” in Paik's work, 218
- Judd, Donald: aluminum boxes of, 154; and the *Drawing Now: 1955–1975* exhibition, 45; and industrial fabrication methods, 146; and “primary structures” (in the eyes of Watts), 196; “Specific Objects” (1965), 115, 128
- Kahn, Douglas: on Knowles's *The House of Dust*, 221–22
- Kalish, Ursula: and the multiple, 146
- Kanayama, Akira, 83
- Kandinsky, Wassily, 20, 50; and the point, 48, 65, 203
- Kaprow, Allan, 130, 196; *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, 109; on abstract expressionist materials and methods, 72; and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116; and Brecht (his carpool buddy), 82, 109, 244n35; and Cage, 9, 46, 82, 86, 230n8; and “A Concert of New Music,” 15; on Fluxus, 162; and the grid, 43; and the Intermedia '68 festival, 215; on Paik's outmoded and obsolete devices, 219; and Pollock, 21, 82–83; *Yard*, 122. *See also* Happenings
- Khrushchev, Nikita: as inspiration to Maciunas, 172; “kitchen debates” with Nixon, 117

- Kim, Rebecca Y.: on Brecht's influence on Cage, 60
kinetic art, 34, 54–55, 91–92, 99, 114, 147, 154, 195, 215. See also *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings* (Maciunas)
- Kinoshita, Toshiko, 83
- Klee, Paul, 38–39
- Klein, Yves, 200
- Kline, Franz, 35
- Klüver, Billy: and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116; and the *Art in Motion* exhibition, 122; and the word “object,” 116
- Knížák, Milan: as photographed by Maciunas, 165
- Knowles, Alison, 23, 176, 209, 216; on art, 145; *Bean Rolls* (1963–1964), 141, 153; and Cage, 67; and the Cédille, 191, 193; and Corner's *Piano Activities*, 13; on Fluxus (as an underworld), 174; and *Fluxus 1*, 138; *The House of Dust* (1967), 221–22; on Maciunas's view of the multiple, 144–45; and painting, 71, 242n1; performing Kosugi's *Anima I*, 176; and the public launch of Fluxus, 2–3, 13; “stolen art time-space event,” 202; street performances of, 174–75; *Street Piece* (1962), 202; *String Piece* (1964), 175; *Wounded Furniture* (1965), 250n50
- Köpcke, Arthur: and Brecht's *Drip Music*, 3; and the “Festival of Misfits” (1962), 25; and Filliou, 177
- Kosugi, Takehisa: *Anima 1* (1961), 175, 176
- Kotz, Liz: on the art object becoming destabilized, 158; on Brecht's use of punctuation and graphic elements, 65; on the logic of the event score, 220; on neo-avant-garde practices of the 1960s, 105–6
- Krämer, Sybille: on the diagram, 51, 53
- Krauss, Rosalind: on artwork and viewer, 214; on the grid in modern art, 43; on the legacy of Pollock's drip, 72; on modern sculpture, 154
- Kremeni, Irwin: as dedicatee of Cage's 4'33", 49
- Kron, Joan: and the multiple, 146–47
- Kubota, Shigeko: *Flux Medicine* (1966), 151; and Maciunas, 171
- Kulicke, Barbara: and the multiple, 146
- Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, 3, 198
- Lacan, Jacques, 242n158
- LaFargue, Paul: “The Right to Be Lazy,” 194
- Langer, Susanne: Brecht and, 114
- language: computer, 216; and Fluxus, 4, 10, 19, 65, 214, 220; and the geometric point, 203; of industry (Duchamp), 51; as means of distribution, 214; minimalist, 102; as object-like, 22; and objects, 155, 185, 187; as a set of spatial relations, 65
- laziness. See idleness
- Lebel, Jean-Jacques: and the Cédille's gifting project, 191
- Leeson, Lynn Hershman, 210
- LEF group, 135
- Lehmann-Haupt, Carl: and Forti's *Dance Constructions*, 126
- Leve, Manfred: and Fluxus's “gallery” debut, 134
- Levine, Les: and the Intermedia '68 festival, 215
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 242n158
- LeWitt, Sol: and the *Drawing Now: 1955–1975* exhibition, 45
- Lichtenstein, Roy: and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116; and the drip, 72; and Multiples Inc., 146–47
- limits: and ambiguity, 62; between art and life, 213; of authorship, 143; of the body, 67, 221, 223; of form, 33, 143; and indeterminacy, 61–62, 64; and limitlessness, 105; of musical identity, 68; of the object, 167; of scalability, 38; of simplicity, 50; of technology, 221–22; of the wood block, 84
- Lissitzky, El: Prouns, 20, 39–40
- lists: of actions (in Maciunas's works), 65–66; of all the event scores Brecht had ever written, 102; of “balls” and “rods” (Brecht), 118; of everyday objects affiliated with game play that activate multiple senses (Brecht), 111; of Fluxcenters (Maciunas), 172; of handy, quotidian thingamajigs (Brecht), 106; mailing (of Fluxshops), 137; of paint variables (Brecht), 80; of suggestions for invoking chance (Brecht), 80; of things Filliou lacks and feels a longing for (in *Poème invalide*), 188–90; of “things that light will go through” (Brecht), 106; in *Three Aqueous Events* (Brecht), 10; of “ways to treat objects in order to see them” (Brecht), 123
- literary/literature, 9, 17, 27, 34, 43, 89, 130, 192
- Living Theatre, the, 15–16, 66, 126–27
- loft (as artist's live-work space), 5, 16, 36–37, 88, 125–27, 143–44, 163, 171, 174–75, 193
- loss: and Fluxus homes, 156; and Fluxus objects, 159, 162–64; and Fluxus practices, 26; and having a trade (Ross), 194
- love: as impoverishing to the ego (Freud), 166; “love connector” (Jones), 190, plate 11
- Lowell, Anna: and Brecht, 198
- Maciunas, George, 2–25, 28, 65–67, 73, 78, 88–99, 104, 108–110, 113, 124–25, 129–77, 183–85, 188, 202, 205, 210–214, 221; 4 *Exercises* [sic] (for Brecht), 124; and “abstract chirography,” 94; as “arranger,” 142, 170; on art as an “automatic machine,” 18, 93–94, 131, 214, 220; and the avant-garde, 88, 94; on Brecht, 124; and Brecht's *Drip Music*, 2, 3–4, 6, 11; on Cage's prepared piano, 88; and concrete art, 130–31; and Corner's *Piano Activities*, 13, 108–9; and the decentralization of Fluxus, 172; and the drip, 73; on the event score, 9; *Excreta Fluxorum* (1973), 153, 157; and the first public mention of “Fluxus,” 14–15, 133; *Fluxlabyrinth* (1976), 153; *Fluxus Manifesto* (1963), 7, 8, 22, 73, 169; and Fluxus's “gallery” debut, 134, 177; and the grid, 65–66; *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Paintings* (1961), 12, 21, 78, 89–92, 94, 96, 98–99; Implosions, Inc., 255n32; *Kinetics Nos. 1 to 3* (1969, unrealized), 99; and the “Kleinen Sommerfest—Après John Cage” concert, 16–18, 129–30; “Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art” (1962), 17–18, 93, 130, 210, 213–14, 218; and Ono's Chambers Street loft performance series, 88, 125; as photographed by Watts, 165–66, plate 10; as a photographer, 164–65, 176; as a plagiarist (according to Patterson), 140, 170; and the public launch of Fluxus, 2–3, 13, 108; on the social goals of Fluxus, 135–36; *Solo for Sick Man* (1962), 66; *Solo for Violin* (1962), 65; treatment of women, 171; on variation in performance as a goal, 6; *Water Yam* (1963): 9, 10, 27–28, 100, 110, 113, 129, 230n12. See also AG Gallery; *Anthology of Chance Operations*, An (Young); Fluxboxes
- Mac Low, Jackson, 130; and the AG Gallery, 16, 88; and Brown's *December 1952*, 16; and Cage, 9, 86; and Ono's Chambers Street loft performance series, 125. See also *Anthology of Chance Operations*, An (Young)
- mail, 9, 6, 27, 198; art, 211; and Fluxus headquarters' proximity to post office, 144; mailing list, 137; mail-order, 23, 127, 141, 145–46, 151, 172, 174
- Malevich, Kazimir, 40; and the grid, 44
- Mallarmé, Stéphane: on cats (as “lords of the rooftops”), 178
- manicule, the: as Fluxus emblem, 98–99, 135, 152, 188
- manifestos: “Exemplativist Manifesto” (Higgins), 7, 8, 131; *Fluxus Manifesto* (Maciunas), 7, 8, 22, 73, 169; of *fumisme* (Fragerolle), 180; “The Future of Music: Credo” (Cage), 32; “Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art” (Maciunas), 17–18, 93, 130, 210, 213–14, 218; “Poetical Economy: Towards a New Standard of Value” (Filliou), 193–96; “Projective Verse” (Olson), 34, 235n25; “Statement on Intermedia” (Higgins), 117–18, 214–15, 217; untitled manifesto (Paik), 220
- Manovich, Lev: and the exhibition *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, 209–210
- Man Ray: *Obstruction* (1920), 201
- Marcuse, Herbert: on the biological need for the com-

- modify, 160
 Marioni, Tom: *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends Is the Highest Form of Art* (1979), 210
 Marisol: and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116
 Martin, Henry: on Brecht's objects, 114
 Marx, Karl, 137, 159–60, 172
 materiality: and the activities at the Cédille, 198; and the art object, 26, 70, 106, 116, 128, 154–55, 158–59, 167, 184, 200; and ephemerality, 167–68; and form, 19; of the instrument, 107; limits of, 143; sonic, 44; of the suspense poems, 186
 Mathieu, Georges, 94
 Maxfield, Richard: and the AG Gallery, 16, 88; and "A Concert of New Music," 15; on electronic music, 33; and Maciunas, 88, 142; and Ono's Chambers Street loft performance series, 125; and the *toward events: an arrangement* exhibition, 109–10
 May 1968, 173, 195–96, 261n49, 262n77
 mechanomorphs, 20, 51. *See also* Dada
 Meijer, Dorothea, 141
 Mekas, Jonas: on Maciunas's painting, 89, 246n54
 memory: "memory-value" (Filliou), 193–94; and music (in medieval Europe), 32
 Michelson, Annette: on Husserl's influence on the Cubists, 120
 Miller, Larry: *Orifice Flux Plugs* (1974), 156, 166, plates 9–10
 minimalism, 22, 24, 104–5, 109, 115, 127–28, 131, 143, 146, 154, 195–96, 214; *Black, White and Gray* exhibition, 128; post-minimalism, 24, 82, 99, 116, 182
 Miró, Joan, 39; object-poems of, 185
 Mitchell, W. J. T., 239n95, 242n157
 modernism, 20–21, 25, 29, 43, 52, 72–73, 97, 115, 213
 Mondrian, Piet, 39, 45; and the grid, 44
 Moore, Barbara: on *Fluxus 1*, 139, 253n14; *ReFlux Editions*, 253n8
 Moore, Peter: photographs of Fluxus events, 4–5, 136
 Moorman, Charlotte: and Brown's *December 1952*, 16; and the *Intermedia '68* festival, 215
 Morris, Robert, 120, 130; and "blank form," 22, 55, 104, 127–29, 131; *Box With the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961), 127; *Column*, 127–28; "Essay, Compositions" (c. 1960–1961), 128; and felt, 72; and Forti's *Dance Constructions*, 126; and industrial fabrication methods, 146; *L-Beams* (1965), 128; mirrored cubes of, 154; "Notes on Sculpture" I–IV (1966–1969), 115; and Ono's Chambers Street loft performance series, 125–26; *Pine Portal* (1961), 128; and Pollock, 21, 81–82, 244n30; and "primary structures" (in the eyes of Watts), 196; *Three Rulers (Yardstick)* (1963), 116. *See also* *Composition 1960 #10 (to Bob Morris)* (Young)
 Motherwell, Robert, 35; on the accident, 95; *The Dada Painters and Poets* (1951), 95–96; *Lyric Suite* (1965), 95–96
 Mühl, Otto: and the *Happening & Fluxus* exhibition, 206
 multiple, the, 1–2, 18, 22–23, 106, 118, 135, 137, 142–53, 156, 158, 183, 195, 201, 210; Multiples Inc., 146, 150. *See also* Fluxboxes; object
 Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA), 14, 45, 80, 118, 133, 159, 182, 185
 Museum Wiesbaden, 2, 12, 16, 67
 musicology, 29, 32, 142

 Nancy, Jean-Luc: on community, 204–5; on *désœuvrement* (unworking, idleness), 24, 174, 204–5; dialogue with Bataille and Nancy, 263n96
 nationalism: and pissing contests, 11, 218. *See also* Paik, Nam June
 Nauman, Bruce: and the *Drawing Now: 1955–1975* exhibition, 45
 neo-avant-garde, 2, 14–17, 23, 28–29, 55, 67–68, 73, 82, 89, 92, 105, 115, 117, 126, 133, 138, 142–43, 213–14, 217, 22, 232n32; vs. 1960s jazz avant-garde, 258n19; as postwar avant-garde, 153. *See also* avant-garde; neo-dada
 neo-dada, 14–15, 52, 73, 93–94, 96–97, 105, 109, 113, 115, 118–20, 131, 133, 147, 159, 210; "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art" (Maciunas), 17–18, 93, 130, 210, 213–14, 218. *See also* Dada; neo-avant-garde
 Nesbit, Molly, 51
 network, 16, 18, 22–23, 26, 135, 144, 172, 174, 193, 198–202; Fluxus collective as, 263n89; and new media art, 211–13, 218, 220, 222. *See also* *Eternal Network*, the
 Newman, Barnett, 35
 new media, 20, 24, 117, 119–20, 210–17, 221–22
 New Realism (*Nouveau Réalisme*), 14, 105, 109, 115, 180, 214
 New York School: interactions between composers and painters, 29, 35
 Nitsch, Hermann: and the *Happening & Fluxus* exhibition, 206
 Nixon, Richard: debates with Kennedy, 117; "kitchen debate" with Khrushchev, 117
 Nono, Luigi: on graphic notation and indeterminacy, 45
 Nyman, Michael: on the use of toys in Cage's *New School* course, 106

 object, 22, 105, 135; as 1960s aesthetic category, 115–18; anti-, 19; as (anti-)commodity, 158; as commodity, 20, 158, 161; "crisis of" the (Breton), 14; and Cubism, 250n53; "dis-inventing" (Filliou/Brecht), 182; "disobedient," 161; and event, 106–9; and form, 24; found, 14; and image, 117; *Intermedial Object #1* (Higgins), 216; notational, 101–132; object-relations, 25, 109, 117, 129, 153, 156, 160–61; "objects without object" (Filliou), 23, 169–70, 172, 174, 200–202; pedagogical function of the Fluxus, 137, 161, 170; performative, 28, 55; performers as, 126–27; portability of, 135; as prop, 124–29; score as (for Brown), 55; vs. score (for Brecht), 7; of spectatorship (in Paik's work), 218; suspense poems (Filliou), 23, 178, 185–91, 197–98, 200, 215–17; transitional, 157, 160–61. *See also* assemblage; Fluxboxes; sculpture
Object Without Object (Filliou), 170, 200–202
 obsolescence, 25, 145, 159, 163; of art, 161; planned, 117, 146, 213, 219; of traditional notation (for Cage), 33
 Oldenbourg, Serge: and the Cédille's gifting project, 191
 Oldenburg, Claes, 130; and accumulation, 256n52; and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116; and the *Drawing Now: 1955–1975* exhibition, 45; and Multiples Inc., 146; *The Store* (1961), 122, 182, 213; and the *toward events: an arrangement* exhibition, 109, 114; and the word "object," 116
 Olson, Charles: "Projective Verse" (1950), 34, 235n25
 Ono, Yoko: Chambers Street loft performance series, 16, 88, 125–26; *Cut Piece* (1964), 210; as dedicatee of Cage's *o'oo"*, 68; event scores of, 55; and *Flux Year Box 2*, 153; *Instruction Paintings*, 94; as photographed by Maciunas, 164
 open form, 43; Brown's notion of, 54–55; Eco on the "open work," 239n109; Wölflin on, 240n123
 orality, 165–66, 151; in Paik's work, 219. *See also* anality; body, the
Orifice Flux Plugs (Miller), 156, 166, plates 9–10
 Ossorio, Alfonso: *Fluxus* (1956), 96, plate 3; and the Gutai group, 96; on Pollock's drips, 96–97
 Overton, Adam: UploadDownloadPerform.net (2008–2014), 223

 Paik, Nam June: on Brecht, 220; and Brecht's *Drip Music*, 3; on cybernated art (and cybernated life), 220; and the drip, 73; *Exposition of Music-Electronic Television*, 134, 139, 218–19; *Fluxus Champion Contest* (1962), 11, 218; and Fluxus's seizing of the "distribution-medium," 172; and the *Intermedia '68* festival, 215; and the "Kleinen Sommerfest—Après John Cage" concert, 16–18, 129–30; and the legacy of Fluxus, 24; *Listening to Music through the Mouth*

- (1962–1963), 218–19; and Maciunas, 16; manifesto of (1966), 220; and musical training, 36; on the notion of requiring permission to perform Fluxus works, 170; *Participation TV* (1963), 210; and the public launch of Fluxus, 2–3, 13; and the use of television sets, 118, 217–19; *Zen for Head*, 6, 13, 97, 143. See also *Composition 1960 #10 (to Bob Morris)* (Young)
- participation, 22–23, 61, 96, 120, 122–23, 174, 209–211, 221; do-it-yourself, 33, 120, 135; as interactivity, 14, 34, 104–5, 114–15, 118, 135, 144, 147, 200, 218. See also *Art of Participation, The: 1950 to Now*
- Patterson, Benjamin, 16–17, 23, 130; and the body, 221; and Corner's *Piano Activities*, 13, 108–9; and Filliou, 178; and the "Fluxus Preview," 173, 177; *Instruction No. 2*, 151; and the "Kleinen Sommerfest—Après John Cage" concert, 16–18, 129–30; on Maciunas as a plagiarist, 140, 170; *Methods & Processes* (1962), 67, 68; and musical training, 36; *Paper Piece*, 206; *Poems in Boxes*, 178; and politics, 261n57; and the public launch of Fluxus, 2–3, 13, 108; *Variations for Double-Bass* (1961–1962), 13, 108
- Paul, Christiane: on Fluxus and digital art, 211
- Paxton, Steve: and Forti's *Dance Constructions*, 126
- Peirce, Charles Saunders: on the pure diagram, 52; on "type" and "token," 59
- Pfeuffer, Joachim: and the Cédille's gifting project, 191
- piano, 13, 32, 36, 40–48, 54–61, 78, 84–88, 106–9, 123, 139, 218–19. See also prepared piano
- Picabia, Francis: and the diagrammatic, 51; and *Relâche*, 154
- Piekut, Benjamin: on "distributed authorship," 143. See also authorship
- Pietz, William: on the work of art as fetish, 156
- piss: Brecht's "raining" and "pissing" event score, 10; in Brecht's *Three Dances*, 10; Paik's pissing contest, 11, 218; Warhol's "piss paintings," 72. See also body, the: excretion; shit
- politics, 261n57; and art, 197; of Filliou and Brecht, 192–93, 198; of Higgins, 217. See also protest
- Pollock, Jackson, 35, 48, 90, 94, 96–97, 119, 143; Brecht and, 10–11, 63, 71–76, 79–82, 87, 96; and the drip, 10, 21, 71–75, 80–83, 87, 96–97, 244n30; and Feldman, 55; "NO CHAOS DAMN IT," 80; *Number 29* (1950), 80, 81; *One: Number 31, 1950* (1950), 80–81, plate 2
- "polychrome" music (Maciunas), 16, 88
- Poons, Larry, 130
- Pop art, 14, 105, 109, 116, 137; multiple, 143–48, 150. See also multiple, the
- postmodernism: 20, 25, 168, 202, 212
- prepared piano, 84, 88, 107–8, 139, 218. See also piano
- Pritchett, James: on Cage's graphic notation, 40–42
- protest: against the bourgeois consumption of the revolutionary avant-garde (Swenson), 182; against conventionalization of *Drip Music* (Brecht), 4; and "disobedient objects," 161; Maciunas's picketing of a Stockhausen concert, 261n57; student (Filliou on), 195. See also politics
- punctuation: cedilla, 174, 185–91, 194, 197–98, 203–4, plate 12; comma, 198; ellipses, 198, 203; hyphen, 203; question mark, 187–88, 261n49
- pure music. See absolute music
- Rainer, Yvonne: and Forti's *Dance Constructions*, 126; on the humor in Morris's *L-Beams*, 128
- Rauschenberg, Robert, 115, 159; and (appropriated) architecture, 213; and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116; and *The Art of Assemblage* exhibition and panel discussion, 14, 133; *Black Market* (1961), 121–22; Brecht and, 114, 119–23; and Cage, 35, 46–47, 49, 119; combines, 114, 120, 121; and "A Concert of New Music," 15; and the *Drawing Now: 1955–1975* exhibition, 45; *Interview* (1955), 119; *Pilgrim* (1960), 120, 121, 123; and Pollock, 119; *Short Circuit* (1955), 119; and the use of "real-world" objects, 119 *White Paintings* (1951), 49; and the word "object," 116
- readymade, the, 9, 15, 19–20, 22, 51, 104, 109, 161; "temporal readymade" (event scores), 9, 87, 230n10. See also Duchamp, Marcel
- rear-guardism: of Fluxus, 25, 67, 145, 153, 157, 159
- Rebay, Hilla von, 48
- Reichenbach, Hans, 79
- Reinhardt, Ad, 35
- relational aesthetics, 264n103
- Restany, Pierre: and the Cédille, 193
- Retort collective, 161
- Reuben, Anita, 109. See also Reuben Gallery
- Reuben Gallery: and Brecht, 90, 109–10, 114, 118–20, 126; and Forti, 126
- Richter, Gerhard: as inspired by Fluxus, 24–25
- Riley, Terry: and the Intermedia '68 festival, 215; and Ono's Chambers Street loft performance series, 125
- Rimbaud, Arthur, 194
- Robinson, Julia, 247n1: on Brecht's work, 104; on the Fluxus score, 163; on Pollock's work, 81
- Rodenbeck, Judith: on the figure of the "black box," 232n32
- Rodin, Auguste, 154
- Rosenberg, Harold: on action painting, 83, 95
- Rosenquist, James: and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116
- Ross, Kristin: on the loss that comes with having a *métier*, 194
- Rotella, Mimmo: and the Cédille's gifting project, 191
- Roth, Dieter, 23; and the Cédille, 193; and Filliou, 196, 198; *Material 2* (1959), 253n14; *Poem Machine* (1964), 139, 151, 152, 156
- Rothko, Mark: and Feldman, 35
- Rothman, Roger: on Fluxus and hacker culture, 211–12
- Sabot, Audrey: and the multiple, 147
- Saint Phalle, Niki de: and Filliou, 177
- Saito, Takako, 23; on authorship, 170; and the Cédille, 190, 193; and the Fluxus production team, 146; on Maciunas's treatment of women, 171; *Make 300 holes with any implement: This is my gift* (1964), 166–67; "stolen art time-space event," 202
- Salcius, Almus, 16, 88–89. See also AG Gallery
- Samaras, Lucas: and the *toward events: an arrangement* exhibition, 109–10, 114
- Saper, Craig: on Fluxus as network-like, 211
- Satie, Erik, 107; on notation, 58
- Saussure, Ferdinand de, 242n158
- scale, 14, 154; handy (of multiples), 147; and *November 1952* (Brown), 38; and Pollock's work, 82–83; "small-scale opportunism" (Smith), 145
- Scheyer, Galka: and Cage, 48
- Schlemmer, Oskar, 38
- Schmela, Alfred, 16
- Schmit, Tomas: and Brecht's *Drip Music*, 3; and the drip, 73; on Fluxus and the outside, 175–77; and the Fluxus production team, 146; and Fluxus's "gallery" debut, 134; *Poems* (1963), 134; and the public launch of Fluxus, 2–3; *Zyklus for Water-Pails* (1962), 11, 97
- Schneemann, Carolee: and the Intermedia '68 festival, 215
- Schoenberg, Arnold, 40, 63; and Cage, 84
- Schwartz, Arturo, 255n39; as the "only strictly honest gallery director [Brecht had] ever known," 184; and the reproduction of Duchamp's readymades, 147
- Schwitters, Kurt, 95
- score. See event score
- Scull, Robert: as not wanting people to touch the artworks he owns, 150. See also touch
- sculpture: vs. the 1960s object, 115–29; Fluxboxes as, 144, 155–59; narratives of modern, 153–55; and surface, 154–56; and touch, 115, 119, 148–55. See also assemblage; object

- Seagull, Sara: and the Fluxus production team, 146
- Segal, George: and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116; and the *toward events: an arrangement* exhibition, 109, 114
- Sehgal, Tino, 223
- Seitz, William: and *The Art of Assemblage* exhibition and panel discussion, 14–15, 118, 133
- Serra, Richard, 72
- Sharits, Paul: and *Flux Year Box 2*, 153
- Shattuck, Roger: and *The Art of Assemblage* exhibition and panel discussion/the first public mention of “Fluxus,” 14–15, 133
- Shiomi, Mieko, 23, 73; and the Cédille, 191; and the drip, 73; *Endless Box*, 155, 160; and Maciunas, 171; and musical training, 36; *Water Music* (1964), 12, 98
- shit: and early Canal Street (Buckingham), 254n27; to grow flowers (in Filliou and Brecht’s mock proposal to eliminate social strife in the US), 193; the “shit of life,” 221; “shit porridge” (Maciunas’s description of Knowles’s bean dish), 153; “useless” (of Canal Street), 254n27. *See also* anality; asshole; body, the: excretion; piss
- silence: and *désœuvrement*, 205; and the geometric point (for Kandinsky), 48, 203; and the grid, 43; of speech (Blanchot), 204. *See also* 4’33” (Cage)
- Silverman, Kaja, 257n74
- Sloan, Sonny: and the multiple, 146
- Smith, David, 96
- Smith, Owen: on Fluxus, 145, 172, 211; on Maciunas’s “Musica Antiqua et Nova” events, 88–89
- Smithson, Robert: *Spiral Jetty* (1970), 154
- Sohm, Hanns: and the *Happening & Fluxus* exhibition, 206
- Something Else Press, 67, 87, 166, 171, 183–84, 192. *See also* Higgins, Dick
- Soulages, Pierre, 94
- Spoerri, Daniel, 16, 176; on Brecht’s critique of Stünke, 184; and Brecht’s *Drip Music*, 3; and the Cédille’s gifting project, 191; Édition MAT (*Multiplication d’Art Transformable*), 114, 146–47, 183; and the “Festival of Misfits” (1962), 25; and Filliou, 173, 185, 200; and *Material 2* (1959), 253n14; as photographed by Maciunas, 176
- Spoerri, Vera, 178, 179
- Staffeldt, Marianne: and Filliou, 173, 178, 181, 190–91, 231n17
- Steinberg, Leo: on the “flatbed” picture plane, 119
- Stjernfelt, Frederik: on the diagram, 52–53, 70, 78
- Stockhausen, Karlheinz, 16, 61, 63; Brecht on the work of, 61; on graphic notations, 45–46, 50–51, 53; *Klavierstück XI* (1956), 43, 60, 139, 237n68; picketed by Maciunas, 261n57; on the spatialization of sound and notation, 34
- structuralism, 242n158
- Stünke, Hein: Brecht’s critique of, 184
- subjectivity (“in flux”), 160–68
- Surrealism, 11, 14, 63, 79, 94, 103, 111, 115, 118, 160–61, 171, 180, 185, 187
- suspense poems (Filliou), 23, 178, 185–91, 197–98, 200, 215–17
- Suzuki, Daisetz T.: and Cage, 86
- Swenson, Gene: as against the bourgeois consumption of the revolutionary avant-garde, 182
- Szeemann, Harald: and the *Happening & Fluxus* exhibition, 205–6
- Takis: and the Cédille, 193; and Filliou, 195
- Taruskin, Richard: on the conservative musical regime, 67; on work-fidelity and text-fidelity, 31
- taxonomy: and Fluxboxes, 22–23, 157. *See also* Fluxboxes
- television, 13, 48, 117–18, 182, 217; Paik and, 118, 134, 217–19
- Tenney, James: and *The House of Dust* (1967, with Knowles), 221–22
- Thomkins, André: and the Cédille’s gifting project, 191
- Thomson, Virgil: on abstraction as coming late to the practice of music-writing, 53; on the New York School of composers as a “pressure group,” 30
- Tilman, Pierre: on the cedilla, 187–88; on Filliou, 180
- Tinguely, Jean, 200; and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116; and Filliou, 177, 180; *Méta-matics*, 114; and the word “object,” 116
- Tobey, Mark, 94
- token (vs. type), 59, 112–13, 240n128, 249n29
- touch: and cinema (in *Flux Year Box 2*), 153; and Fluxboxes, 148–53, 160; in Paik’s work, 219; *Prière de Toucher (Please Touch)* (Duchamp), 115; prohibition of, 150; in working-class consumer choice, 148. *See also* Ay-O
- transitional commodities, 23, 137, 159–61. *See also* Fluxboxes
- transparency: Cage and, 57–58, 110, 139; Dadaist manipulations of, 51–52, 58; and Fluxbox packaging, 158; Kubota and, 151; Maciunas and, 65
- Tudor, David, 30; and Brecht, 75; Bussotti’s *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor*, 45, 78; and Cage, 16, 36, 57, 62–63, 68, 75, 143; and Feldman, 36; and Ono’s Chambers Street loft performance series, 125; as a virtuoso performer saving failed works (according to Nono), 45
- Twombly, Cy, 72
- Tzara, Tristan, 79, 172
- underground, the: and Fluxus, 134, 174, 177, 184, 218
- Université Populaire d’Été, 196
- USCO, 215
- VanDerBeek, Stan, 130
- van Doesburg, Theo, 130
- Varèse, Edgard, 16; and Feldman, 38; and “projection,” 38
- Vautier, Ben, 5, 23; “bag over the head,” 139; and Brecht, 196; and the Cédille, 193; *Dirty Water* (1963), 11, 140, 151, 153; and the “Festival of Misfits” (1962), 25; and the first Fluxus exhibition, 135; *Flux Holes* (1964), 22, 140, 151, 153, 155–57, 159, 191; and *Fluxus 1*, 138; and the “FUCK FLUXUS” intervention, 206; *Magazin* record shop, 172; *Mystery Envelope*, 138; performing Kosugi’s *Anima I* (1961), 175, 176; and signing “everything,” 148; street performances of, 174–75; *Total Art Matchbox* (1965), 153
- Vietnam, 192–93, 217, 261n57
- Villeglé, Jacques Mahé de La: and the Cédille’s gifting project, 191
- virtual: the dependence between work and performance as (Goehr), 54; Fluxus and the, 24, 209–223
- virtuosity, 35, 38, 67, 113; erasure of (for Feldman), 38
- Vostell, Wolf: and Corner’s *Piano Activities*, 13; *Dé-coll/age*, 217; and *Flux Year Box 2*, 153; and the *Happening & Fluxus* exhibition, 206; *Kuh* (live cow-birthing event), 206; and Maciunas, 16; and the public launch of Fluxus, 2, 13; and the use of television sets, 118
- Warhol, Andy: *Dance Diagram* paintings, 55, 120; *Do It Yourself* paintings (1962), 120; and the drip, 72; *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, 215; *Factory* of, 146, 177, 182; and the grid, 43; “piss paintings,” 72; and Pollock, 21; signed Campbell’s soup cans, 150
- Waring, James: *Gossoon* (with Brecht), 126; and the *toward events: an arrangement* exhibition, 109–110
- Water Yam* (Brecht, Maciunas), 9, 10, 27–28, 100, 110, 113, 129, 230n12
- Watts, Robert, 23; and the *Art 1963—A New Vocabulary* exhibition, 116; and Brecht, 83, 180, 244n35; chromed-plated works, 150, 155; *Events*, 151; *Flux Timekit* (1966), 158; and *Flux Year Box 2*, 153; *Hospital Events* (1963), 134–35; Implosions, Inc., 255n32; and Kaprow, 244n35; on minimalist sculpture, 195–96; photograph of Maciunas, 165–66, plate 10; and the signature, 148; *Two Inches* (1962), 175

- Webern, Anton, 16, 40, 63
Werktreue, 31
- Westermann, H. C.: Brecht and, 111, 249n27
- Whiting, Cécile: on the use of touch in working-class consumer choice, 148
- Whitman, Robert: and the *toward events: an arrangement* exhibition, 109–10
- Wilhelm, Jean-Pierre, 16–17, 95
- Williams, Emmett, 130; and Brecht's *Drip Music*, 3; and the Cédille's gifting project, 191; and Corner's *Piano Activities*, 13; and the "Festival of Misfits" (1962), 25; and Maciunas, 16, 172; and the public launch of Fluxus, 2–3, 13, 108
- Winnicott, D. W.: on the notion of the transitional object, 157
- Wolff, Christian, 63, 125; and Cage, 30, 41; and the *I Ching*, 41; and Ono's Chambers Street loft performance series, 125
- Wölfli, Heinrich: on the inevitability of artworks, 58
- Wolpe, Stefan: and Feldman, 38
- Wols (Alfred Otto Wolfgang Schulze), 94
- Woods, Nicole: on Knowles's *The House of Dust*, 221
 writing: and the geometric point, 48; and the real, 77–78
- Wurm, Erwin: *One Minute Sculptures* (2007–2008), 210
- Young, La Monte, 130; and the AG Gallery, 16; *An Anthology of Chance Operations* (1963), 9, 15, 27, 38, 67, 127, 128, 138–39; on the banality of Fluxus, 230n11; and Brown's *December 1952*, 16; *Composition 1960 #9*, 139; *Composition 1960 #10 (to Bob Morris)* ("Draw a straight line and follow it"), 6, 13, 97, 125, 143, 230n11; and the drone, 125, 128; event scores of, 55; on Fluxus vs. stasis, 230n11; and Maciunas, 88, 94; and musical training, 36; and Ono's Chambers Street loft performance series, 125. *See also* Paik, Nam June: *Zen for Head*
- Youngblood, Gene: on the formation of the Intermedia Systems Corporation, 215
- Zen, 95; and Brecht, 114; and Maciunas, 94–95; and Pollock (via Ossorio), 96; *Zen for Head* (Paik), 6, 13, 97, 143