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| **Fluxus** |
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| Fluxus is a laboratory for the creation, dissemination, and exhibition of social and experimental artwork. Through an international network of artists, designers, filmmakers, and composers, Fluxus promotes collective artistic labour and an interactive experience with art. Drawing on the ideas of the Soviet Union’s Novy Lef group of 1929, Fluxus objectives concern the social over the aesthetic and highlight the dissemination and interactive potential of the art object. Central to Fluxus art (Flux Art) is the relationship between artwork and participant, which is often established through the form of jokes, gags, games or events. Rooted in the pedagogical experiments of Black Mountain College and John Cage’s seminar at the New School for Social Research, Fluxus philosophy countered a formalist approach to art by requiring the participant to interact with the artwork. Flux Art remains incomplete without a participant’s engagement. Rejecting the notion of Fluxus as an art movement, artists emphasized that Fluxus is a particular way of living and doing that filtered into the creation of art, music, film, and residential communities. |
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Link: http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2011/fluxus\_editions/works/games-puzzles-ball-swim-and-inclined-plane-puzzles-from-fluxkit/  Link to photographs of George Brecht’s *Games and Puzzles* *(Bull, Swim and Inclined Plane Puzzles),* Fluxkit, 1965, Fluxus Edition announced 1964-65  In 1963, George Maciunas, a founding member of Fluxus, published a manifesto to describe Fluxus objectives:  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, —  PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART.  Promote living art, anti-art, promote NON ART REALITY to be…grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals.  FUSE the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action.[[1]](#footnote-1)  Link: http://www.moma.org/explore/inside\_out/inside\_out/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Image\_2.sm\_.jpg  2 Link to scan of George Maciunas’ Fluxus manifesto, 1963  Rooted in the pedagogical experiments of Black Mountain College and John Cage’s seminar at the New School for Social Research, Fluxus philosophy countered a formalist approach to art by requiring the participant to interact with the artwork. Flux Art remains incomplete without a participant’s engagement. Interactivity, Forti argues, gives the object value.[[2]](#footnote-2) Because of this, Craig J. Saper and Simone Forti argue that Fluxus work is intrinsically social and pedagogical. Flux Art would often include instructions for the user, or in the case of Fluxus Post Kits, the person delivering the art object. These activities, Saper argues, structure the ‘Fluxus Laboratory,’ a term that incorporates the collaborative labour and experimentation between artists, artwork, and participants.[[3]](#footnote-3) Maciunas promoted these ideas throughout New York in the early sixties. Initially rejected, he chose to expand the concept to Europe, where his proposals garnered an early following. When Maciunas returned to New York in September 1963, international artists such as Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, John Cage, and Robert Watts began to incorporate Fluxus philosophy into performance art, mail art, film, sound compositions, and art magazines. Flux Art Early examples of Fluxus work include the Fluxconcert, which consisted of events and performances.  Link: http://www.ubu.com/sound/fluxus\_box.html  3 Link to Ubuweb: Sound, Fluxus Anthology 30th Anniversary. Recordings of performances, interviews.  Maciunas also created Fluxhouses, a set of cooperatives where artists could live, work, and exhibit. In an early exhibit, Maciunas opened a temporary FluxClinic that mocked and criticized the institutionalization of humans in society. Artists would measure the dimensions of a visitor’s body and record the measurements in a Fluxpassport.[[4]](#footnote-4) In the Fluxhouse 80 Wooster Street, Maciunas hosted Flux feasts, which included a New Year’s Eve Flux Fest consisting of Flux Eggs (emptied egg shells filled with items such as plaster, white gelatin, or dead bugs), Salad Soup by Yoshi Wada, and Shooting Candies with Gun into People’s Mouths by Robert Watts.[[5]](#footnote-5) Additionally, Fluxus artists created Post Kits, which mimicked the structure of the postal system and incorporated the participation of the mailman.[[6]](#footnote-6) Fluxus Film Works (Fluxfilms) Another significant component of Flux Art is the moving image. In the early Fluxus laboratory, artists utilized protocinematic methods of filmmaking and focused on simple movements. For example, Dick Higgins’ Fluxfilm No. 2, 1966, featured a mouth chewing and Yoko Ono’s Fluxfilm No. 4, 1967, cantered on the movement of a pair of buttocks. The movements were often looped on short film reels, a process antithetical to Hollywood films. Fluxfilms lacked the conventional narrative progression found in popular cinema and utilized humour to produce an effect in the audience, referencing Marcel Duchamp’s use of the ‘corrosive joke.’[[7]](#footnote-7)  Link: http://www.ubu.com/film/fluxfilm.html  4 ‘Fluxfilms’ Link to Ubuweb Fluxfilm Anthology (1962-70)  Link: http://www.ubu.com/film/fluxfilm02\_higgins.html  5 ‘Fluxfilm No. 2, 1966’ Link to Dick Higgins’ Fluxfilm No. 2  Link: http://www.ubu.com/film/fluxfilm15a\_ono.html  6 ‘Fluxfilm No. 4, 1967’ Link to Yoko Ono’s Fluxfilm No. 4 Fluxhouses As Fluxus continued to expand, Maciunas created the cooperative ‘Fluxhouses,’ utopic communities composed of neighbouring buildings in which artists could work, live, exhibit, and perform in a single space. The Fluxhouse promoted collective artistic production and residency rooted in socialist ideology. Over a period of ten years, Maciunas devoted his time to developing the Fluxus residential community in SoHo. When Maciunas began advertising the new cooperative, the lofts were located in the M1-5 zoning district of SoHo, designated for warehouse, manufacturing, or commercial purposes, which made tenancy illegal. In 1971, New York Mayor Robert Wagner permitted artists to live in two lofts per factory, on the condition that sanitation and cooking regulations were met and a six-inch ‘A.I.R. (Artist in Residence)’ sign was placed on the façade of the building in compliance with fire codes. Many artists withdrew from Fluxhouses when they discovered the zoning obstacles. Nonetheless, Maciunas worked around real estate syndication laws and filed Fluxhouses as agricultural cooperatives, after which the city issued a warrant for his arrest.[[8]](#footnote-8) During this time, artists created the SoHo Artists’ Association and the Artist Tenants Association to lobby for the residential rights of artists in SoHo. Flux Art, Non-Art Rejecting the notion of Fluxus as an art movement, artists emphasized that Fluxus is a particular way of living and doing that filtered into the creation of art, music, film, and residential communities. In artist Dick Higgins’s words, ‘(Fluxus is) a way of doing things, a tradition, a way of life and death.’[[9]](#footnote-9) |
| Further reading:  (Bernstein and Shapiro, Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the)  (Fortin)  (Friedman)  (D. Higgins)  (H. Higgins, Fluxus Experience)  (Saper, Networked Art)  (Selz and Stiles) |

1. George Maciunas, ‘Fluxus Manifesto,’ 1963, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists’ Writings*. Ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 727. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Simone Fortin. *Handbook in Motion*. (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Craig J. Saper. ‘Fluxus as a Laboratory,’ *The Fluxus Reader*. Ed. Ken Friedman. (West Sussex: Academy Editions, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Hannah Higgins, ‘Fluxus Fortuna,’ *The Fluxus Reader*, Ed. Ken Friedman, (West Sussex: Academy Editions, 1998), 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For detailed descriptions of Fluxus events at 80 Wooster Street, see Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro’s *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo*, (Vilnius, Lithuania: Jono Meko Fondas, 2010), 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Mailmen were instructed to choose between two mailing addresses and thus given the agency to direct the destination of the kit. Craig J. Saper, ‘Fluxus: Instructions for an Intimate Bureaucracy’ *Networked Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Craig J. Saper, *The Fluxus Reader*, 155 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo*, (Vilnius, Lithuania: Jono Meko Fondas, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ken Friedman, ‘Introduction: A Transformative Vision of Fluxus,’ *The Fluxus Reader*, viii. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)