FluxAttitudes


Organized by Susan Hapgood and Cornelia Lauf, Guest Curators
Exhibition installation by Rirkrit Tiravanija
Catalogue and brochure by Nancy Dwyer
Participation of sixty-two artists

There are various ways to structure an exhibition about historical art, even art made during the last thirty years. There is the chronological progression, the connoisseur's choice, the great nations survey, the theme show, and the social history perspective—leading in turn to the discovery of the neglected Other—and the multicultural approach. We did not want to belittle any of these time-honored methods, adopted by Western museums from the Musee d'Orsay to The New Museum of Contemporary Art. But as the curators of this exhibition we believed the elusive Fluxus movement required another tack.

Organizing an exhibition about Fluxus along chronological lines seemed pointless, as did highlighting key individuals. A good number of supposedly Fluxus artists dispute both the term and their membership, defining their affiliation instead by the miles they'll drive to distance themselves from both. Nonetheless, museums throughout the world are presenting a variety of Fluxi, grappling with an amorphous, slippery character, force-fitting the institutional straitjacket onto an abundance of anti-institutional manifestations one might call the Fluxus movement.

The general consensus of scholarly parasites claims that Fluxus was made by a loose-knit collective of artists who gathered some time in the early 1960s from the fields of music, performance, film and art. They pursued forms that were formless, events that could be repeated by anyone, and a battery of props that—unless perhaps in the annals of Zurich Dada—had few precedents for their economy of means, wit, mutability, and capacity for endless replication.

If one were to organize this exhibition chronologically with supposedly neutral documentation as a goal, where would one stake the precise beginning or end for Fluxus? And anyway, who would hammer the stake? Here the mercurial figure of George Maciunas enters, the man who appointed himself custodian of Fluxus, the stake-driver and list-maker. Some time in 1962 he began to systematize the many events that often arose from ideas transmitted in the late 1950s by John Cage. Maciunas named the ever-changing group Fluxus and proceeded to feverishly package and promote the work of this diverse and gifted collective of people until his death in 1978—occasionally creating some art of his own along the way. If most agree that Fluxus officially began around 1962, when did it end? Some say it died with Maciunas, others say Fluxus lives to this day. With due respect to Maciunas, it was too arbitrary to doggedly follow his list and his dates.

After all, "the idea of Fluxus was to democratize the making process, devalue the commodity status of the art work, and free people to think about art in an everyday kind of way, with more humor than reverence. So, as we see it, FluxAttitudes is a tribute to this spirit, not to the differences between the individuals, but to their commonality. It includes the work of figures historically associated with the movement, as well as contemporary artists whose work reflects a Fluxus approach. It celebrates sensibility over form, the living over the relic.

While the appearance of the exhibition, both its first venue in 1991, at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center in Buffalo, New York, and now at The New Museum, has mutated, its conceptual foundations have remained constant. In Buffalo, we integrated period Fluxus and post-Fluxus works of art with documentation, toys, and assorted books in an environment that blurred categorical distinctions, and always emphasized the viewer's interactive role. Throughout, we have aimed to expose the unspoken procedures of curators and institutions. For The New Museum, we even suggested a theme: we asked artists to address the 1992 U.S. Presidential elections in their work. Participants were invited to contribute an interactive element to the exhibition: a score, a performance, an object, or an idea that directly involves the visitor. Each work in FluxAttitudes is assigned an insurance value of $0, and information labels attributing specific works are once again eliminated. While these aspects caused some discomfort, we want to revive, momentarily, Maciunas's beliefs that art should be accessible to all, without commodity or institutional value, and that the individual ego should be suppressed in the interests of the collective. (Regarding his 1963 manifesto calling for a purge of bourgeois sickness, intellectual, professional, and commercialized culture—well, that wasn't so easy.)

There were various reactions to our invitation letter as the written responses on display indicate. Some artists refused to participate. Others did not answer. And then there is a list, a motley, glorious, seemingly infinite list of proposals for the visitor-activated work you see, hear and make in these two galleries. And this entire project, we hope, in its eclecticism, arbitrariness, and disrespect for traditional notions of quality and framing, will have a democratic strength, lightness of touch, and Fluxness of attitude.

*"After all" means we get the last word here.

Cornelia Lauf and Susan Hapgood, Guest Curators © 1992
Works in the Exhibition
Unless otherwise noted, all works are dated 1992

Aaart Guise Ink
*The Big Game (Attitudes Smattitudes):*
Table-top action game

Ricci Albenda
Tattoo shop with polaroids of body tattoos created by the artist to be used in a growing display

Eric Andersen
*Opera 583:* A participatory performance in a stanchioned area with badges to be taken by visitors

Ay-O
*Boil and Fry:* Various objects to be boiled and fried by the artist

Guillaume Bijl
*Video Control System from the Meier Supermarket,* 1990: Videotape of a supermarket surveillance system and accompanying musak

John Cale
Audiotape

Giuseppe Chiari
*Arte* booklet

Tony Conrad
Installation involving audience votes for presidential candidates

Philip Corner
*Piece-of-Reality Presidency:* Cumulative media piece about the presidential election

Nancy Dwyer
Exhibition catalogue and brochure

Ken Friedman
*Fluxus Invites Hans Haacke to Investigate The New Museum of Contemporary Art:* Graphic inquiry

Al Hansen
*Fluxus 3-D Fax:* Telexed image of George Maciunas to be crumpled

Sandra Hastenteufel
Joshua Schwarz
Videotape of exhibition opening

Geoffrey Hendricks
"Free sample" packets of dirt with accompanying sets of instructions

Georg Herold
*Xth Station:* The Bible set upon a table beneath a plaque inscribed with the oath, "I swear to tell the truth . . ."

Dick Higgins
*Concerto for Politics 1961/1966:* Performance piece involving pouring water from one glass into another

Alice Hutchins
*State of the Union:* Platform with magnets to be manipulated by the audience

Ray Johnson
*Nothing:* Three red printed figures on a sheet of paper

Alison Knowles
Loose-leaf album containing artists' proposals for *FluxAttitudes*

Petr Kotik
*No Pain—No Gain:* Performance piece of artist doing acupuncture on himself

Liz Larner
Petri dish with agar culture activated by Women's Action Coalition (WAC)

Jackson Mac Low and Anne Tardos
Collaborative performance

Christian Marclay
Collaboration with security guard Elon Joseph who plays harmonica periodically throughout the exhibition

Jackie McAllister
*lego uno chess set,* 1991: White Lego brick chess game

Jill McArthur
*Are you human?:* Installation

David Medalla
Five performances examining gender transformations and the interaction of world cultures, and an ongoing painting project

Vik Muniz
Zen Domino

Maurizio Nannucci
Small pieces of paper with printed messages distributed during the exhibition

Yoko Ono
*Mending Piece:* Broken cups and dishes reassembled by the audience

The O'Party!

Nam June Paik
Two magnet TVs

Paul Ramirez-Jonas
*Why Things Fly:* Factory model and vacuum cleaner construction with themes and slogans used in the Teddy Roosevelt campaigns

Michael Ross
*Finger Exercise:* Instruction cards for voting or pulling trigger, on shelf for audience to take

Carolee Schneemann
Painted white strip of carpet with plaster molds of cat feces

Paul Sharits
*Interactive Fluxusness:* Double-sided plexiglas mirror used to fingerprint self onto mirror image

Mieko Shiomi
*Letter Event 1992–2012:* Sealed air mail letters opened by visitors on specified dates and replaced with objects or messages of visitors' choice
Laura Stein
Cobweb installation and rubber stamp images of artist's blood cell to be stamped on visitors

William Stone
Participatory Democracy: Wood box with flag, light, and small fan, activated when viewer pushes a button

Rirkrit Tiravanija
An Installation Event: Show Up to Fill an Empty Space for Susan, Cornelia, and Alice:
Exhibition installation

Danny Tisdale
Transition, Inc.: Performance piece asking sensitive questions about identity

Yasunao Tone
Sound installation activated by visitor

Marc Travanti
Stratagem: Performance involving standing fan, mounted tape player, and speaker

Wolf Vostell
48h Fluxus Dance, 1992, and LeCri, 1990:
Score for truck performance and videotape of 1990 Paris performance

Yoshimasa Wada
Performance piece played on plumbing pipes

David Wells
Box containing toaster to heat and cook the Constitution of the United States and Thomas Paine's Common Sense

Martin Zimmerman
Exhibition signage

Ay-O and David Medalla will be performing intermittently during the exhibition period. Additional performances will occur on the following Saturdays beginning at 2:00 pm, with the exception of Marc Travanti, who will perform at 3:00 pm.

October 3
David Medalla

October 17
The OParty!

October 24
Danny Tisdale, Marc Travanti

October 31
David Medalla

November 7
The OParty!

November 14
David Medalla

November 21
Marc Travanti

December 5
David Medalla

December 12
David Medalla

December 19
Danny Tisdale, Marc Travanti