

FLUXUS VIVUS

NOVEMBER 2 THROUGH 4 DECEMBER 1993 THE ARTS CLUB OF CHICAGO

THIS CATALOGUE IS PUBLISHED BY THE ARTS CLUB OF CHICAGO IN CONJUNCTION WITH **FLUXUS VIVUS** A CELEBRATION OF THE WORK OF FLUXUS ARTISTS FROM THE INCEPTION OF FLUXUS IN THE 1960s THROUGH THE

P R E S E N T

IN THE FALL OF 1993 AND EARLY 1994, FIVE CHICAGO ART INSTITUTIONS ARE SALUTING **THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF FLUXUS**, AN ART FORM THAT HAS CHALLENGED THE CONVENTIONS OF ARTISTIC MEDIA, THE ROLE OF ART AND ARTIST, AND THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ACTION AND OBJECT, OBJECT AND MUSEUM, AND ART AND LIFE THE PARTICIPANTS IN "FLUXUS FESTIVAL CHICAGO 1993" INCLUDE: **THE ARTS CLUB OF CHICAGO**; MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART; MARY AND LEIGH BLOCK GALLERY AT NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY; AND GALLERY 400 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO; AND THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO.

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INTRODUCTION
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MAPPING FLUXUS IN CALIFORNIA

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PREFACE

Attempting to construct any history of Fluxus is indeed a problematic project. While Fluxus practice simultaneously rejects and relishes the processes of naming, dating or recording, its very essence undermines attempts to fix it as a movement. The resulting dilemma is that it is difficult to locate Fluxus in art history without historicizing it, but is worse to see it omitted from finite and essentialist art histories.

The thirtieth anniversary of the birth of Fluxus, celebrated in exhibitions,

performances and events in international locations during the past year has provided many new opportunities for scholars and critics to re-evaluate its history. With three decades of historical perspective, it is now possible to better understand Fluxus' contributions to contemporary art. Some earlier histories perpetrated stereotypes, fabricated false

chronologies, favored connoisseurship over analysis, or dismissed Fluxus altogether. More recently scholars, have

attempted to critically evaluate just how Fluxus functions within the larger art historical, cultural and

socio-political contexts.¹ These new histories expand Fluxus discourse by overcoming biases of generation and geography to address the full range of its activities in diverse locations.

Chieko Suomi's *SPATIAL POEM* NO. 2, from the 1966 *FLUXUS ATLAS* series (FIG. 1) is a map of Fluxus artists and activity at a given moment.

This "direction event" records the simultaneous actions of Fluxus artists and friends on three different continents at 10 p.m. on October 15, 1966.

As it maps each person's relative position and cardinal direction, the *spatial poem* reflects aspects of Fluxus: simple actions, bodily functions, chance, coincidence, humor and an

obsession with time, space and place. On a more literal level, it schematizes the global nature of Fluxus artists and network, locating most sites in Europe and New York, a few in Japan, with a lone explorer in Los Angeles.

While it represents a specific moment in time, this spatial poem is also a metaphor for Fluxus histories, which tend to privilege Europe and New York over other locations, such as the West Coast and Japan.

In my dissertation I am attempting to map a range of Fluxus and Fluxus-related activities in California from 1959 to the present. Unlike Fluxus work in Europe or New York, the extent of this sporadic activity still remains largely uncharted and unknown. This paper outlines some of the topics I have investigated including pre-Fluxus events from 1960-65; the apex of Fluxus activities from 1966-1972; the waning of Fluxus in the mid-1970s and the resurgence of Fluxus in California in the 1980s and 1990s. My areas of research include Fluxus artists who have lived, worked and visited California;

Fluxus and related material in archives, collections and exhibitions around this state and the impact of the Fluxus presence on other inter-media and performance artists. I hope to show how this activity amounts to more than just the work of a few individuals in a few places, but fits into a larger matrix of the state's continuing legacy of experimental artistic production from more than three decades.

PRE-FLUXUS

ACTIVITIES IN

CALIFORNIA:

1958 1965

The first pre-Fluxus activities in California grew out of the rich tradition of contemporary and experimental music which flourished in both the northern and southern parts of the state, primarily in the colleges, universities or art institutes. As early as December 1959 composer and musician La Monte Young,

who had studied with John Cage in Darmstadt, Germany, did a solo performance, *VISION*, at the University of California in Berkeley.² In May of 1960, Young joined Terry Riley and Walter De Maria for two collaborations of compositions and improvisations. One at U.C. Berkeley and the other at the California School of Fine Arts, now the San Francisco Art Institute.³

A few months later in July, the three musicians participated in a concert, *simultaneous performance of four compositions by: la monte young, terry riley, walter de maria, dick higgins*,

sponsored by the Composer's Workshop and presented at the Old Spaghetti Factory and Excelsior Coffee Shop on Green Street in San Francisco, a favorite North Beach haunt of the Beat poets.⁴ Although Dick Higgins was not there, this was the first time his work was presented on the West Coast and the beginning of his continued association with projects and people in California.

At the end of 1960 La Monte Young moved from San Francisco to New York, where he

organized a semi-nal series at Yoko Ono's Chambers Street loft to present new art forms in music, poetry and other events.⁵ The series included presentations of music and poetry by the California composer Terry Jennings, and works by Richard Maxfield and Joseph Byrd, both of whom would subsequently come to California to teach. These early pre-Fluxus concerts are important for several reasons. First, as Owen Smith astutely observes, the evidence the interdisciplinary sensibility that prevails in Fluxus, and second, they set a precedent for events organized by artists themselves.⁶

They also mark the ongoing process of exchange between visual and performing artists from the East and West Coasts that is vital to Fluxus.

Other Bay Area work sympathetic to the burgeoning intermedia sensibility at this time includes the "Kinetic theater" taking place at Ann Halprin's Dancers' Workshop Company Studio. Her training program involved studies in "growth, kinesthetic, and process related to dance, theater and education and involving movement, sound, light, speech, environments and cinematography." Halprin's interdisciplinary melange of experimental theater pedestrian dance

and new music, often performed on outdoor platforms, involved collaborations with Bay Area artists including La Monte Young, who was her musical director 1959-60, and Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Morris, Steve Paxton and Terry Riley, who would later participate in New York Fluxus events.

By 1962 the prevalence of intermedia and experimental performance in the Bay Area became known to George Maciunas, who listed San Francisco (along with Tokyo) as a potential location for an early Fluxus Festival.⁸ It is not clear who Maciunas contacted in San Francisco, but no Fluxus festivals took place in either of these two locations.

Oldenburg's happening at the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics on Beverly Boulevard, the third part of a trilogy which began in Chicago and Washington D.C., was based on a series of five different poems about driving and cars.¹⁰ Both of these New York-based artists used everyday actions and images of popular or media culture in their pre-planned, theatrical spectacles.

It was not until a few years later that the full impact of Fluxus would be felt in the San Francisco Bay Area.

In 1963 two Los Angeles events were among the first intermedia activities to occur in the Southern California region. Robert Whitman's *water and Claes*

Oldenburg's *autobodys* are well-documented happenings by New Yorkers whose large-scale performances reflect different aspects of Southern California culture.⁸

Whitman's theatrical piece in a multi-car garage off La Cienega Boulevard (and later in a private home garage in Westwood) was a rehearsed

tableau vivant of color light, water and moving figures performing various tasks.

to photograph a pair of silver scissors which she printed directly onto the

canvas like a Rayogram. After drawing pieces of paper to determine the order of the images,

Knowles then silk-screened the thirds together into a composite image

onto forty-two bright yellow canvases and on dozens of other everyday objects

including gloves, stockings, bathing suits, light bulbs, a lunch box, a tool chest, linens, and floor mats

(FIG 2). Brecht randomly selected the title for the anonymous project, *Sissor*

Brothers Warehouse, from the *new/jersey yellow pages*. The artists documented their

collaboration in photographs with Lette Eisenhauer posing in a *bois*

doir/Blink-shop, filled with silk-screened objects (FIG 3)

letters that spell the word, "Blink," and Knowles used a graphics camera

Prices for the objects, ranging from 43 cents to \$200, were assigned through a chance operation.

The *sissores brothers* collaboration became a warehouse with a multitude of commodity *blink* objects

crowding the entire gallery. Although the meaning of the *blink* changes in different contexts, it reflects the Fluxus sensibility of using

everyday objects, actions and language to merge art and life. This absurd work

pokes fun at single (and male) authorship, the notion of uniqueness and the commodity status of art.

The screening of the image on canvas and its gallery display make the work saleable items, yet *blink* parodies high commodity Pop Art

works with its refusal to commit to a known author

Recently, Knowles acknowledged that the combination of the tattooed torsos, the word "blink," and the sharp blades with the model—a veritable field-day for feminists and

Freudians—raises issues about spectatorship and the female body that were not intended, or considered thirty years ago.¹²

Knowles and Watts took the project to Los Angeles and did an installation/performance at the new Rolif Nelson Gallery that took place from October 7 through November 3

1963. Although a *sissores brothers poster* exists (FIG 4) the artists remained unannounced. At the opening, the La Cienega gallery audience saw the performances of Fluxus events scores by Watts and Knowles, and a "docent" tour by Patty Oldenburg.

artists organized by composer Joseph Byrd and jazz trumpeter Don Ellis in 1963, was another direct connection to Fluxus in Southern California.¹³ Initially the New Music Workshop presented work that emphasized sound improvisation rather than formally structured music, but in early 1965, it moved toward more theatrical and visually oriented work.¹⁴ Through Joseph Byrd, the Workshop expanded its interests to include Fluxus, the Once Group, the San Francisco Tape Center, the Judson Church Group and others trying to achieve a "total aesthetic" in performance.

In December of 1965 the New Music Workshop and Graduate Students Association organized, performed and presented *The International Steamed Vegetable Pie Fluxus Festival*, a distinct medium, or a definite price. When Art Seidenbaum covered the show in the *Los Angeles Times*, it did not appear in the art section, but in his human interest column, the *Spectator* apt name since *blink* refers back to the viewer (or reviewer) their own reflex in the process of looking. And when Watts showed the anonymous "blink" canvas to art dealer Ivan Karp, the dealer proclaimed it as "the worst painting he had ever seen," a testimony to provocation of the work. Today, *blink* canvases exist in private collections, at the Museum Ludwig and the Image lives on in a Watts commemorative stamp.

The University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) New Music Workshop, a group of musicians, dancers and

a series of three evening concerts named by a Dadaesque randomness selection of a recipe from the *Alice B. Toklas Cookbook*.¹⁵ The program included Fluxus compositions by George Maciunas (*Piano Piece No. 1 for Nam June Paik*), George Brecht (*word event*), Toshi Ichianagi (*Piano Piece No. 5*), Nam June Paik (*Playable Music No. 4*), Chieko Suomi (*Boundary Music*) and Emmett Williams (*cellar song for five voices*) and other works by Marcel Duchamp, Earle Brown, La Monte Young, Simone Morris, Walter DeMaria, Morton Subotnick and Once. Adding a visual accompanist and using Fluxus scores with simple directives to elicit specific actions allowed the Workshop to replace formal structure and break boundaries in their work.

Other scores were not performed live, but were published in a special limited edition set of program notes including "music, stories, essays, letters, constructions, compositions, concept art, maps, anti-art, lists and other works expressible graphically."¹⁶ Produced through the courtesy of Fluxus, *The International Steamed Spring Vegetable Pie Festival* presented many different types of compositions and text that first introduced full-fledged European and New York Fluxus work to Los Angeles audiences.

FLUXUS IN LOS ANGELES, SAN FRANCISCO AND BEYOND, 1966-1972

It is difficult to discuss Fluxus from the mid-1960s through the early-1970s without first acknowledging that California was a wellspring for alternatives. The civil rights, free speech and Beat movements of the late-1950s and early-1960s were followed by student activism, anti-war protests and hippie counterculture of the mid-to-late 1960s. This created an activist environment in all levels of society and within existing institutions. Established public educational systems and private art schools tried to adjust to myriad social and political changes. For example, the University of California and the State University systems created experimental colleges and art departments,

while the more traditional academies like the Chouinard School of Art and the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music merged into the innovative new California Institute of the Arts.

In the mid-late 1960s Fluxus began to meld with a range of other alternative and counter-culture activities in California. Newly established alternative spaces and artist-run galleries became ideal sites for presenting experimental art and performance.¹⁷ Small presses, little magazines and journals published works of art and the Underground Press Syndicate, especially the *Los Angeles Free Press* and the *Berkeley Barb*, provided a forum for artists' writing and criticism.¹⁸

international, an

exhibition of his own collection of avant-garde materials at two Bay Area museums, the San Francisco Museum of Art and the Stanford Art Gallery, Stanford University²⁴ (FIG. 5). The title and idea of the exhibition derived from *aktual*, a European term referring to a way of life filled with social, philosophical and spiritual engagement, which Berner knew through his acquaintance with the Czech Fluxist Milan Knizak. The international group of participants exhibited "avant-garde posters, manifestos, objects, lithographs, books, photographs, happenings kits, periodicals, memorabilia and ephemera from international underground activity," as Berner infiltrated yet another established institution with provocative Fluxus and Flux-like material.²⁵

new ideas to alert his readers about Fluxus philosophy and activities around the world.²¹

Jeff Berner became the impresario for live events including a *Fluxfest* at the Longshoreman Hall, San Francisco, where he brought Fluxus into the realm of popular culture.²² Directed by Berner and presented by Larry Baldwin, this event included compositions by Ben Vautier events by Ben Patterson and Allan Kaprow, Fluxus films, Fluxphones (loaned by Pacific Telephone) with live performances by a Flux orchestra, the San Francisco Mime Troupe and pop bands such as Wildflower and the Quicksilver Messenger Service.²³

Berner also organized *aktual art*

* Artists' books and correspondence art also became increasingly important genres.¹⁹ When the newly established alternatives did not work, many artists, particularly those in Fluxus, took matters into their own hands.

A champion of all things underground and alternative, San Francisco-based artist, writer and teacher Jeff Berner became involved with Fluxus in about 1965-66.²⁰ Berner taught French culture at the U.C. Berkeley Extension and a course at the University of California, San Francisco Extension called the "Astronauts of Inner Space," a workshop and survey of international avant-garde activity. He wrote a column with the same name for the *San Francisco Chronicle* from 1967 to 1968, using the popular newspaper as a forum for his

of Fluxus North. Along with Maciunas, leader of the Fluxus Headquarters in New York, these four acted as a Fluxus "Board of Directors," but in true Fluxus form, they functioned as a quasi-bureaucratic structure that did not meet regularly.

When Friedman returned to California in the autumn of 1966, he honored his commitment to Maciunas by setting up Fluxus West in San Diego. Maciunas announced this new regional center in a Fluxus newsletter and Fluxus West became the first officially sanctioned Fluxus activity in California.³⁰ On the last day of 1966 Friedman established a second branch of Fluxus in

printed on the inside. Higgins saw how it possessed the gag humor and Zen-like simplicity characteristic of Fluxus objects and arranged a meeting between Friedman and George Maciunas.²⁶ At this first meeting Maciunas recruited Friedman into Fluxus. As a Fluxus artist, Friedman found an outlet and a vocabulary for what he was doing and met others who shared his sensibility.

When Maciunas suggested that Friedman open a Fluxus center when he returned to California, Friedman agreed. He decided to name the center "Fluxus West."²⁹ This name inspired Maciunas to design stationery with the names of other Fluxus locations. Milan Knizak led Fluxus East in Prague, Ben Vautier headed Fluxus South in Nice and Denmark's Per Kirkeby was named director

Another active Fluxus artist and organizer in California at this time was Ken Friedman. In 1966 Friedman went to New York to meet Fluxus artist and Something Else Press editor and publisher Dick Higgins.²⁸ Friedman knew of

Something Else Press through his interest in underground publications and had previously corresponded with Higgins.²⁷ Although Friedman did not consider himself to be an artist at that time, one morning he showed Higgins an object he had made, an old-fashioned box of wooden matches painted white with the words, "Open Me" printed on the top and the words "Shut Me Quick,"

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San Francisco. From this new center, Friedman made his own Fluxus work, disseminated information and works of other artists and tried to create communications networks for Fluxus. He taught courses at the Experimental College at San Francisco State College, where he shared ideas about Fluxus. At San Francisco State College he taught other courses entitled: "Literature of Surrealism and the Avant-Garde" in the English Department, and "Intermedia" in the Radio-TV-Film department.³¹

In the summer of 1967 Friedman bought his first "Fluxmobile," a Volkswagen bus that became his work space and office as he traveled up and down the state of California to produce festivals and concerts, organize lectures and readings under the rubric of Fluxus West.³² In addition to his writing scores and performing many of his own events, Friedman also performed the work of Fluxus colleagues in alternative sites such as clubs, coffee houses, bookstores and churches.

In the early 1970s Friedman began to present Fluxus exhibitions in more established venues. The *Fluxshoe*, a project co-conceived by Friedman and Mike Weaver under the auspices of Fluxus West in England, was realized and coordinated by David Mayor in Devon.³³

First presented at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, August 24-October 23, 1973, the exhibition subsequently traveled to other locations in England: Exeter, Croydon, Cardiff, Nottingham, Blackburn and Hastings. The *Fluxshoe* exhibited scores, documents, drawings, notes, diagrams and other texts by an international roster of "artists, non-artists and artists" including Bay Area conceptualists Terry Fox, Bill Gaglione, Tom Marioni, Barry McCallion and Jock Reynolds, whose drawing appeared on the exhibition announcement card (FIG. 6). The *Fluxshoe* publication of these artists' documents in the exhibition became a sourcebook for ancillary performances that occurred as it traveled through England.³⁴

Throughout the years Friedman gradually donated original works of art, multiples, books and documents from Fluxus West to archives at major universities and museums to make Fluxus more accessible in public institutions.³⁵ Friedman is still active in his roles as a Fluxus artist, organizer, writer and disseminator and he continues to honor the commitment he made to George Maciunas more than twenty-five years ago.

From 1969 to 1970 Fluxus artist Robert Watts (FIG. 7)

taught at the University of California at Santa Cruz in the new Experimental Arts Program,³⁶ Gordon Woods, head of the University of California, Santa Cruz art department and former director of the San Francisco Art Institute, conceived the program and received funding through the Carnegie Foundation.³⁷ In addition to Robert Watts, artists such as John Cage and Merce Cunningham, Dan Flavin, Allan Kaprow, George Segal, Jan van der Marck and James Lee Byars came to U.C. Santa Cruz to do guest lectures for a year-long intensive program.

One artist recruited for the class was Jock Reynolds, who was studying sculpture at U.C. Santa Cruz.³⁸

According to Reynolds, Watts' teaching methodology centered around the Fluxus ideals of collectivity and collaboration. Watts was not particularly didactic, pedagogic or theoretical; he preferred not to tell anyone what to do and his ego did not prevent him from participating as an equal in various projects. The grant enabled the workshop to obtain special equipment such as a first-generation Sony Portapak for video and Wollensack audiotape recorders and xerox machines to foster forays into new media. Watts' introduced students to his own work such as his chrome-plated objects, and used Fluxus ideals of collectivity, collaboration and experimentation.

to change the students' assumptions about art and studio practice. Workshop members created individual actions which were scored as collaborative performances and live events. For one entitled *Aeronakes*, "stewardesses" took a group of passengers on an experimental "test flight" in a bus with blacked-out windows, an adventure that featured roadside attractions including a simulated crash through a contact paper brick wall built by Jock Reynolds, and a silver alien who burst into flames (FIG. 8). Another test flight, *PSSNEU*, ended with a loud series of alarms and sirens, and Watts instructed everyone to take a pill as an antidote to potential radiation exposure.

which changed the color of their urine the next morning. Occasionally, the Workshop participants would go to other campuses for collaborative activities, such as a March 1969 trip to a Fluxus exhibition curated by David Antin at U.C. San Diego where they participated in a *Fur Family Parade* (FIG. 9), a Dada-like event held in La Jolla.³⁹ These live events, while more deliberate and extended than a short action, still reflect the Fluxus tenets of surprise, humor and gags, with Watts as the chief Merry Prankster. Living up to its name, the U.C. Santa Cruz "Experimental Workshop" course afforded the participants the truly Fluxus experience of making new intermedia works. When Watts returned to New Jersey in 1970 at least one of the U.C. Santa Cruz students went to Rutgers University to study with him; others went to Southern California to the California Institute of the Arts where they had the opportunity to work with other Fluxus artists. California Institute of the Arts (Cal Arts) resulted from a merger of the Chouinard Art Institute founded in 1921 and the eighty-two year old Los Angeles Conservatory of Music.⁴⁰ Nicknamed "Walt Disney's Dream School," the endowment for the Institute came from the entertainment magnate's estate

and its philosophy derived from his idealistic blueprint for a "community of the arts" in Los Angeles.⁴¹ In 1968 Cal Arts established schools in Art, Music, Theater and Dance, Film/Video and Critical Studies to emphasize "interdisciplinary experiences and to foster an interaction of visual experience, performance, painting and humanities."⁴² The Dean of Art, painter Paul Brach, and the Dean of Critical Studies, urban sociologist Maurice Stein, asked Allan Kaprow to recommend artists to teach in this experimental environment.⁴³ They followed Kaprow's suggestions to hire Fluxus artists Dick Higgins, Emmett Williams, Nam June Paik, Peter Van Riper, James Tenney and Alison Knowles to teach at Cal Arts during the years 1970-72.⁴⁴ Dick Higgins' triple appointment in Design, Theatre and Critical Studies accommodated his expertise as an artist, publisher and writer/theorist. When he was hired he was also invited to move Something Else Press with him to California. Higgins continued as editor/publisher while teaching at Cal Arts; Emmett Williams was President of the Press and Ken Friedman became General Manager during the Press' tenure in California. The titles and descriptions of some of the Cal Arts courses taught by Fluxus people reflect the

alternative, interdisciplinary course-work at Cal Arts and their own art/life interests.⁴⁵ Dick Higgins' "Events, Happenings and Other Performance Structures," was a systematic inquiry into recent performance works and styles; "Wild Foods/Botany Ecology" explored the ecology and the natural history of the valleys and mountains surrounding Cal Arts and "Publishing Workshop," included books, broadsides, magazines and phonographic records, and issued several ongoing publications.⁴⁶ Nam June Paik's video courses, "Everything You Were Afraid to Do About Television" and "Who Is Afraid Of Johnny Carson," emphasized in Paik's own words "not the present art form, but a future art form, not the present,

gallery/museum art, but future art society, based on cable TV and videocassette."⁴⁷ Allison Knowles and Peter Van Riper taught a workshop in photo-silkscreen printing. Knowles was also a "mentor" Cal Arts terminology for an independent study supervisor while Riper also taught "Art Experience Course." Emmett Williams' "Some Current Trends in Literature," included poetry and graphics; animated poetry and cumulative prose, with a close look at the work of Fluxus associates Robert Filliou, Dieter Rot and Daniel Spoerri. Composer James Tenney, taught "Introduction to Musical Acoustics" and "Music of John Cage."⁴⁸ Although Dick Higgins was initially excited about teaching at Cal Arts and moving Something Else Press to

Ultimately disappointed by the difficulties of working in a brand new, disorganized institute, Higgins left Cal Arts after one year and moved to Vermont to make art and to run the Something Else Press. Allison Knowles first came to Cal Arts in 1970 and continued her Fluxus work in performance and installation work while in California. She installed her ongoing project, *House of Dust* (FIG. 10), a sculptural environment, performance space and computer-poem generator at the temporary Cal Arts campus in Burbank in 1970.⁴⁹ Her first California performance, *Apple Event* (FIG. 11), involved 90 anonymous visitors who each traded one

of their own possessions for one of 90 red apples placed at the site. For the 1971 *Poem Drop Event* (FIG. 12), commissioned by Cal Arts for its move to Valencia, a helicopter dropped computer printed poems on the *House of Dust*. That same year Knowles performed *Identical Lunch* for the Duchamp Festival at the University of California at Irvine, and *An Evening of Performances* for *Artasia*, a collaboration with Peter Van Riper.⁵¹ Knowles' most ambitious performance in California, the *Gift Event II* 1972, an all day event based on a Kwakiuti Indian ritual, involved participation from everyone at Cal Arts.

performance and body art, video, correspondence art, etc.—felt the "fallout" and residual effects of Fluxus activity.⁵⁴ After this waning period, in the 1980s Fluxus began to resurge in California, with performances, exhibitions and new acquisitions by museums and archives. Jerry Benjamin's 1980 performance of pieces by Dick Higgins and Jackson Mac Low, the *Monster Fluxus Event* at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) introduced younger Los Angeles artists to Fluxus.⁵⁵ The *Fluxus* etc. exhibition and publication which traveled to the Baxter Art Gallery at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena in 1983,

FLUXUS WANING IN THE 1970s, RESURGENCE IN THE 1980s AND 1990s

As Dick Higgins has observed, between 1970 and 1972 there was probably even more actual Fluxus activity in California than New York, given the combined presence of Fluxus artists at Cal Arts and the amount of projects generated through Fluxus West.⁵² During the remainder of the 1970s when many of the Fluxus artists left Cal Arts and Ken Friedman traveled around the U.S. and Canada.⁵³ Several artists involved with new genres of the 1970s that began to flourish in California and elsewhere—conceptual art, installation,

introduced Southern Californians to the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus collection. Jon Hendrick's *Fluxus Codex* published in 1988, the most comprehensive document on the Silverman collection, has exposed an even broader audience to a major Fluxus collection and a specific vantage point about Fluxus.

The acquisition of the Jean Brown Collection of Fluxus documentation, artists books, concrete and visual poetry by the Getty Center for the Art History and Humanities in Santa Monica in 1988 is the most definitive sign of Fluxus resurgence in California in recent years.⁵⁶ Although it will not be on public view until the Getty Center opens their new permanent facility,

the collection has already prompted scholarly activity. In June and July of 1992 the Getty Center sponsored *Reading and the Arts of the Book*, an interdisciplinary conference and institute exploring the effect of book arts on artistic and literary production.⁵⁷ As an adjunct to the conference, the Center organized an exhibition, *Connections: Explorations in the Getty Center Collections*, by inviting four contemporary artists to install work from its collections. Los Angeles-based conceptual and book artist Buzz Spector opted to re-install three vitrines from the Jean Brown Collection in conjunction with objects from a plastic picnic lunch.⁵⁸

This gesture shows Spector's keen understanding of the humor and irony of Fluxus. His own carefully chosen additions both mock and honor the cheap, everyday, mass-produced quality of Fluxus objects. Spector simultaneously acknowledges Fluxus' ongoing importance and calls attention to the dichotomy of an institution like the Getty taking formerly inexpensive, accessible, non-commodity work, and pre-serving it in archives or displaying it in hal- lowed halls. In his witty installation, Spector created a meta-critique of fetishized objects, museum presentation and scholarship to re-present and re-interpret Fluxus.

The most recent Fluxus exhibition in Southern California was February 1993 installation of artists' books and Fluxus material from the library of the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles. Acquired by critic, curator and former Otis librarian Joan Hugo, the collection functioned as resource material for a class taught by instructor Donald Krieger who then worked with his students to install the works in locations around the campus. This process-oriented exhibition within the context of an art school re-freshed the memories of those who had known or had recently remembered Fluxus, and cultivated a new audience for those too young to have experienced Fluxus in the 1960s and 1970s.

Many young artists in California, disillusioned by the extreme inflation and commodification of the art market in the mid-late 1980s, have embraced the non-commercial, anti-establishment, art-meets-life Fluxus agenda in its recent revival in the 1990s. These most recent Fluxus exhibitions raises some pertinent issues. How have Fluxus and Fluxus artists functioned within the institutional framework in California from 1960 until today? How have the exchanges between artists from locations outside and within the state created an ongoing Fluxus network?

What has been the reception to Fluxus and Fluxus-related activities in this region and how has it contributed to its newly revered status. And most important, now that the territories and chronology of California Fluxus have been mapped, how can they be interpreted within the broader context of Fluxus activity and other contemporary art? Most of the events in California discussed in this paper result from specific connections between artists, a processes of exchange intrinsic to Fluxus from its inception. The earliest concerts from 1960 to 1965 in the Bay Area and Los Angeles were

Even the most recent exhibitions have occurred through specific connections between Californians and others within the international Fluxus network.

connected to Fluxus through La Monte Young and the experimental music scene. Artists Oldenburg and Whitman first worked alongside Fluxus in New York and then wanted to present their happenings and events in the mass-produced, media-invaded, pop-processed Los Angeles environment. Californians Ken Friedman and Jeff Berner used their talents as artists, writers and teachers to spread the word of Fluxus by organizing events and issuing publications in California and beyond. Robert Watts, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles and the other Fluxus people traveled West to be part of California's new experiments in art education through the recommendations of other artists.

3 LEWES CHRONOLOGY DATES THESE MAY 2ND AND 5TH, RESPECTIVELY. OWEN SMITH CONCURS IN *GEORGE MACIUNAS AND A HISTORY OF FLUXUS, DR. THE ART MOVEMENT THAT NEVER EXISTED*. HIS UNPUBLISHED DOCTORAL DISSERTATION, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, 1991, 59.

1 SOME OF THIS RECENT SCHOLARSHIP INCLUDES DISSERTATIONS BY SIMON ANDERSON (ROYAL ACADEMY OF ART, LONDON), INA BLOM (UNIVERSITY OF OSLO), HANNAH HIGGINS (UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO), JAMES LEWES (UNIVERSITY OF IOWA), DIRK LUCKOW (FREE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN) AND OWEN SMITH (UNIVERSITY OF MAINE) AND ESSAYS BY ELIZABETH ARMSTRONG, SIMON ANDERSON, ANDREAS HUYSSEN, BRUCE JENKINS, DOUGLAS RAHN, OWEN SMITH AND KRISTINE STILES IN THE EXHIBITION CATALOGUE FOR *THE SPIRIT OF FLUXUS*, PUBLISHED BY THE WALKER ART CENTER IN MINNEAPOLIS, 1993.

2 JAMES LEWES CHRONOLOGY DATES THIS PERFORMANCE DECEMBER 2, 1969.

3 LEWES CHRONOLOGY DATES THESE MAY 2ND AND 5TH, RESPECTIVELY. OWEN SMITH CONCURS IN *GEORGE MACIUNAS AND A HISTORY OF FLUXUS, DR. THE ART MOVEMENT THAT NEVER EXISTED*. HIS UNPUBLISHED DOCTORAL DISSERTATION, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, 1991, 59.

4 LEWES CHRONOLOGY, JULY 1960. A CAMARADERIE BETWEEN THE SAN FRANCISCO BEAT AND PRE-FLUXUS IS IMPLIED BY THE NORTH BEACH VENUE FOR THIS CONCERT. SMITH, 61

NOTES CHESTER ANDERSON, EDITOR OF *BEAT/7/7/62*, ATTEMPTED TO PUBLISH THE POETRY OF JACKSON MAC LOW AND THE SCORES OF LA MONTE YOUNG IN AN EAST COAST VERSION OF THE MAGAZINE. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS NEVER CAME TO FRUITION.

LATER, OTHER BEAT PUBLISHERS SUCH AS CITY LIGHTS DID PUBLISH THE WORK OF ARTISTS INVOLVED WITH FLUXUS. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FLUXUS AND ALTERNATIVE PUBLISHERS OF THE 1950S BEAT ERA, AND THE UNDERGROUND PRESS BOTH DESERVE FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

5 *IBID.*, 66.
6 *IBID.*, 61.
7 FROM A DANCERS' WORKSHOP BROCHURE, UNDATED, ARCHIV SOHM, STAATGALERIE, STUTTGART. I THANK DR. INA CONZEN-MEARS AND DR. HANNS SOHM FOR THEIR TIME AND ASSISTANCE WHEN I WAS AT THE ARCHIV IN JUNE OF 1992 AND 1993.

8 GEORGE MACIUNAS, *NEWS POLICY-LETTER* NO. 1, (3RD VERSION) FROM ARCHIV SOHM.

9 MICHAEL KIRBY, *HAPPENINGS AN ILLUSTRATED ANTHOLOGY*, NEW YORK, 1965, 172-183 AND 262-288.

10 *IBID.* KIRBY NOTES HOW OLDENBURG PLANNED THE HAPPENING PRIOR TO THE DEVASTATING NOVEMBER 22ND ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN KENNEDY, BUT THAT IT WAS INTENSIFIED BY THE VIEWERS' COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE UBIQUITOUS IMAGE OF THE PASSING BLACK CADILLAC MOTORCADE BEING CONSTANTLY REPEATED ON TELEVISION.

11 ART SEIDENBAUM, "ANTI-ART GOES OUT ON A LIMB," *LOS ANGELES TIMES*, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1963, PART IV. 2. SEIDENBAUM'S ARTICLE IS NOT A REVIEW BUT MORE OF A CURIOSITY PIECE WRITTEN FOR HIS "SPECTATOR" COLUMN OF THE L.A. TIMES.

12 KNOWLES AND I DISCUSSED THIS ISSUE IN A JANUARY 1993 INTERVIEW AT HER STUDIO.

13 STEPHANIE MARKS, "STEAMED SPRING VEGETABLE PIE," *LOS ANGELES FM AND FINE ARTS*, JULY 1966, 4-9 AND ORIGINAL PROGRAM NOTES FROM THE *THE INTERNATIONAL STEAMED SPRING VEGETABLE PIE*.

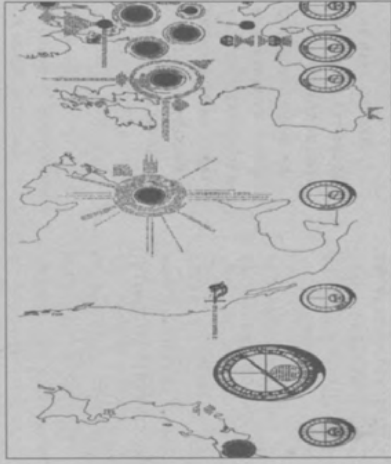
14 *IBID.* MARKS REFERS TO THIS WORK AS "THEATER OF SOUND."

15 *IBID.*

16 *IBID.* FROM THE PROGRAM NOTES COVER SOME OF THE WRITING INCLUDED PAIK'S "TO THE SYMPHONY FOR 20 ROOMS," HENRY FLYNT'S "ESSAY ON CONCEPT ART" (THE PROVISIONAL VERSION) AND WALTER

- BOOKS AND EPHEMERA EXHIBITION CATALOGUE, LOS ANGELES INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART 1978. PROVIDES INFORMATION REGARDING ARTISTS' BOOKS. MICHAEL CRANE AND MARY STOFFLET, EDITORS.
- 22** DATED MARCH 3, 1967 ON A FLYER FROM THE ARCHIV SOHM.
- 23** *IBID.* THE FLUXUS PERFORMANCES INCLUDED VAUTIER'S *STRUNG COMPOSITION* AND *VIOLIN SOLO*. KAPROW'S *TRAFFIC JAM* AND AN UNDOCUMENTED EVENT BY BEN PATTERSON. PATTERSON'S EVENT, BROUGHT TO MY ATTENTION BY KEN FRIEDMAN, INVOLVED COVERING A BRAND NEW CAR WITH STRAW-BERRY JAM, WHICH WAS LICKED OFF BY A GROUP OF WOMEN. IN HER UPCOMING DIS-SERTATION ON FLUXUS RECEPTION, HANNAH HIGGINS WILL DIS-CUSS THE RELATION-SHIP BETWEEN POPU-LAR ROCK AND ROLL MUSIC AND FLUXUS.
- 24** BERNARD BLUSTENE AND FRANCOISE FORSTER-HAHN, EDITORS. *AKTUAL ART INTERNATIONAL*, STANFORD, 1967. ON VIEW MAY 2-21, 1967 IN SAN FRANCISCO AND DECEMBER 28, 1967 AT STANFORD. MANY FLUXUS ITEMS FROM BERNER'S COLLECTION ARE NOW IN THE PERMANENT COLLECTION OF THE WALKER ART CENTER IN MINNEAPOLIS.
- 25** FROM THE EXHIBITION ANNOUNCEMENT CARD REPRINTED IN RUHE. THE ARTISTS IN THE EXHIBITION INCLUDED: ERIC ANDERSEN, AS A BENVENISTE, JEFF BERNER, RENE BERTHOLO, JULIEN BLAINE, J. F. BORY, GEORGE BRECHT, CHRIS BRIER, KLAUS BURKHARDT, LOURDES CASTRO, ROBERT FILLIQU, JOHN FURNIVAL, MATHIAS GOERITZ, JACK HIRSCHMAN, DOM HOUEDARD, ALLAN KAPROW, MILAN KNIZAK, MAURICE LEMAITRE, CHRISTOPHER LOGUE, CAVAN MCCARTHY, PAUL MCCARTNEY, GEORGE MACIUNAS, NAM JUNE PAIK, TOM PITRE, CLAUDE-PIERRE QUEMY, ELNO RUUTSALO, REID SCUDDER, CHIEKO SHIOMI, JACQUES SPACAGNA, JIRI VALLOCH, BEN VAUTIER, WOLF VOSTELL, ROBERT WATTS
- 26** PETER FRANK, "KEN FRIEDMAN" ESSAY IN *THE EVENTS*, NEW YORK, JAAP REITMAN, INC. 1985 AND FRANK'S *KEN FRIEDMAN: LIFE IN FLUXUS*, UNPUBLISHED MONOGRAPH, HELSINKI, FINLAND, 1987.
- 27** *IBID.*
- 28** THE OBJECT ORIGINALLY SHOWN TO HIGGINS BECAME A FLUXUS MULTIPLE, *OPEN AND SHUT CASE*, LISTED IN JON HENDRICKS, ANDERSON.
- 29** MICHEL OREN'S INTERVIEW WITH KEN FRIEDMAN ON JANUARY 30, 1978, PROVIDED COURTESY OF THE SONJA HENIE AND NIELS ONSTAD FOUNDATIONS, HØVIKODDEN, NORWAY.
- 30** SMITH, 420-1, FOOTNOTE 570.
- 31** FRIEDMAN SAYS THAT TO HIS KNOWLEDGE THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THE NAME "INTERMEDIA" WAS USED FOR A COURSE TITLE AT AN AMERICAN COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY.
- 32** SEE JAMES LEWES' CHRONOLOG- Y OR FRANK'S *KEN FRIEDMAN: A LIFE IN FLUXUS*, FOR
- DEMARIA'S "MEANINGLESS WORK." PROGRAM NOTES ALSO LISTED OF WORKS PRESENTED AT EACH OF THE THREE CON-CERTS ON DECEMBER 2, 3 AND 9. CREDITS INCLUDE "PEOPLE WHO DECIDED THINGS "JOSEPH BYRD, NANCY DANIEL, FREDERIC LIBERMAN, DOROTHY MOSKOWITZ AND LINDA BURMAN) AND "PEO- PLE WHO DID THINGS" (BEVERLY RYCHAK, JOAN BRADOW, LEE CROFTON, CHONGHAI ANH AND ANNINA NOSEI).
- 17** *THE NEW ART SPACE*, A SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVE ARTS ORGANIZATIONS, UNPUBLISHED PAPER PRE- PARED AND DISTRIBUTED FOR A CONFERENCE AT THE LOS ANGELES INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART, APRIL 26 29, 1978 AND *LACE 10 YEARS DOCUMENTED*, EDIT- ED BY KAREN MOSS, LOS ANGELES ANGELS CONTEMPORARY EXHIBITION, 1988, PRO- VIDE DOCUMENTATION AND HISTORIES OF THESE ALTERNATIVE OR ARTIST- RUN SPACES IN CALIFORNIA.
- 18** THANKS TO JAMES LEWES, WHO REMINDED ME THAT ANYTHING PRINTED WITHIN THE UNDERGROUND PRESS SYNDICATE COULD BE PUBLISHED FREE BY ANY OF THE 500 OTHER MEM- BERS, IMMENSURABLY INCREASING THE CIRCUL- LATION FOR A GIVEN PIECE.
- 19** JUDITH HOFFBERG AND JOAN HUGO, *ART- WORDS AND BOOK- WORKS: AN INTERNA- TIONAL EXHIBITION OF RECENT ARTISTS'*
- DETAILS REGARDING THE DATES AND PLACES OF FRIEDMAN'S PERFOR- MANCES AND THE EVENTS HE ORGANIZED.
- 33** DAVID MAYOR, *FLUXUSHOE*, BEAU GESTE PRESS, LANGFORD COURT SOUTH, CULLUMPTON, DEVON, 1972. SEE SIMON ANDERSON, *RE-FLUX ACTION*, PH.D. DISSERTATION, ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART, LONDON, 1988, FOR A COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNT OF THE FLUXUSHOE AND THE PARTICIPATING ARTISTS.
- 34** LEWES CHRONOL- OGY INCLUDES TWO *TAJ MAHAL TRAVEL- LERS CONCERTS*, OCTOBER 30, 1973 FALMOUTH SCHOOL OF ART. PERFORM- ERS: FELIPE EHRENBERG, VINCENT GIZZI, HIROKO KOIKE, TAKEHISA KOSUGI, TIMO LEHTONEN, STUART REID, RYO, YUKIO TSUCHIYA AND NOVEMBER 16 AT EXETER UNIVERSITY. PERFORMERS: DAVE BENNETT CAROL, FELIPE EHRENBERG, TAKEHISA KOSUGI, TIMO LEHTONEN, DAVID MAYOR, RYO, YUKIO TSUCHIYA.
- 35** FRIEDMAN GAVE MANY MATE- RIALS TO THE ARCHIV SOHM.

- 37 THE *CARNEGIE FOUNDATION REPORT*, AN UNPUBLISHED AND UNDATED TRANSCRIPT OF THE PROGRAM, WILL SOON BE IN THE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT. MCHENRY LIBRARY AT U.C. SANTA CRUZ AND WILL PROVIDE ADDITIONAL DETAILS ABOUT THE EXPERIMENTAL ARTS WORKSHOP.
- 38 OTHER STUDENTS IN THE COURSE INCLUDED ARTISTS GREG CALVERT, WHO MADE ENVIRONMENTS AND JULIE MONDOT WHO MADE CONCEPTUAL CANVASES. BOTH WOULD LATER ATTEND CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS WHEN OTHER FLUXUS ARTISTS WERE TEACHING THERE.
- 39 ACCORDING TO JOCK REYNOLDS, JOHN BALDESSARI ALSO PARTICIPATED AND ASSISTED IN OBTAINING PROPS FROM AN ARMY SURPLUS SHOW FOR THE PARADE WHICH TOOK PLACE ON MARCH 4, 1969.
- 40 CAL ARTS WAS ACTUALLY INCORPORATED IN 1961 WITH THIS MERGER OF THE ART AND MUSIC SCHOOLS, THEN MOVED INTO A TEMPORARY CAMPUS IN A CATHOLIC GIRL'S SCHOOL IN BURBANK IN 1970. THE PERMANENT FACILITY IN VALLENIA OPENED IN THE 1972 ACADEMIC YEAR.
- 41 "DISNEY'S DREAM SCHOOL," *NEWSWEEK* MAGAZINE, NOVEMBER 8, 1971, 67, AND HARRY G. SALSINGER, "IT WAS DISNEY'S DREAM," *CHANGE*, JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1971, 23-25, BOTH REFER TO THIS PHRASE. THE "DREAM SCHOOL" ALSO BECAME A TRAINING GROUND FOR ANIMATION STUDENTS WHO WOULD OFTEN BE RECRUITED BY THE DISNEY STUDIOS.
- 42 SALSINGER, 24.
- 43 *IBID.* STEIN PRODUCED THE *BLUEPRINT FOR COUNTER-EDUCATION*, FIFTY PAGES OF TEXT AND CHARTS ALLUDING TO AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT, DESIGNED TO BE READ IN A NON-LEAF FASHION, ALTHOUGH I HAVE NOT HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE STEIN'S PUBLICATION, IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE IF IT HAS A CONCEPTUAL LINK TO THE UTOPIANISM
- 44 I THINK DICK HIGGINS FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO INTERVIEW ABOUT HIS TIME AT CAL ARTS ON JULY 7, 1992 IN SANTA MONICA. I PLAN TO INTERVIEW THE OTHER FLUXUS ARTISTS PRESENT AT CAL ARTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE.
- 45 ALL INFORMATION THAT APPEARS HERE IS TAKEN FROM CAL ARTS CLASS SCHEDULES AND COURSE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE 1970-71 AND 1971-72 ACADEMIC YEARS FOUND IN THE CAL ARTS LIBRARY.
- 46 ACCORDING TO HIGGINS, ONE OF THESE WORKSHOP PUBLICATIONS, *SOUNDINGS*, WAS A JOURNAL THAT CONTINUED PUBLICATION FOR TWENTY YEARS. IN MY INTERVIEW HE RECOLLECTED HOW HE TAUGHT STUDENTS THE TRICKS OF THE TRADE AND HOW TO DESIGN PUBLICATIONS ON A LIMITED BUDGET AS HE HAD ALWAYS DONE AT SOMETHING ELSE PRESS. ANNE NOEL, WIFE OF FLUXUS ARTIST EMMETT WILLIAMS, RAN THE PRINTING PRESS AT CAL ARTS, AND
- 47 *IBID.* PAIK'S OWN COURSE DESCRIPTION.
- 48 TENNEY, WHO TAUGHT SEVERAL GENERATIONS OF CAL ARTS STUDENTS, IS THE ONLY ARTIST OF THIS ORIGINAL GROUP THAT STAYED FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME.
- 49 *FLUX CONCERT BY BLUE MOVIE*, AT THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, TUJUNGA, WAS PERFORMED BY DICK HIGGINS, CRAIG LEE, CATHY SCHMIDT AND MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE ON JANUARY 14, 1971, ACCORDING TO A FLYER IN THE ARCHIV SOHM.
- 50 MOIRA ROTH, *THE AMAZING DECADE, WOMEN AND PERFORMANCE ART IN AMERICA 1970-1980*, LOS ANGELES: ASTRO ARTZ, 1983, 108-109, DESCRIBES THIS PROJECT IN DETAIL.
- 51 "ART NEWS," IN *THE LOS ANGELES TIMES*, NOVEMBER 7, 1971, 61-62, LISTS THE IDENTICAL LUNCH PERFORMANCE ON NOVEMBER 23, 1971. THE COLLABORATION IS LISTED AS MAY 12, 1972, ON A FLYER AT THE ARCHIV SOHM.
- 52 STATED IN THE PREVIOUSLY CITED JULY 7TH INTERVIEW.
- 53 FUTURE ARTIST INTERVIEWS WILL REVEAL INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR THEIR DEPARTURES.
- 54 I AM IN THE PROCESS OF INTERVIEWING ARTISTS ACTIVE IN THESE AREAS IN THE 1970S TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF FLUXUS ON THEIR WORK.
- 55 *LACE 10 YEARS DOCUMENTED*, 29.
- 56 THE BROWN COLLECTION IS THE OTHER MAJOR AMERICAN COLLECTION STILL IN PRIVATE HANDS.
- 57 JUNE 25 JULY 3, 1992. GETTY CENTER FOR ART AND HUMANITIES, SANTA MONICA. FOR THE CON-FERENCE DICK HIGGINS PARTICIPATED IN PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND LECTURED ON "A WORLD-WIDE COLLAGE: A LIFE AND THE BOOK."
- 58 BUZZ SPECTOR AND TIM PORGES, CO-EDITORS OF *WHITE WALLS*, A MAGAZINE OF WRITING BY ARTISTS, PUBLISHED A SPECIAL ISSUE ON FLUXUS, VOLUME 16 (SPRING 1987) WHICH WAS GUEST EDITED BY KEN FRIEDMAN.



COURTESY OF THE SILVERMAN COLLECTION

FIG. 1

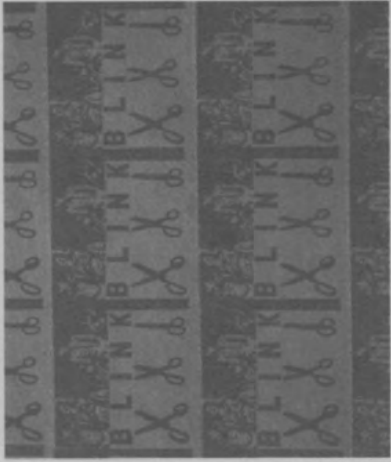


FIG. 2



FIG. 3



FIG. 4



FIG. 5



FIG. 6



FIG. 7

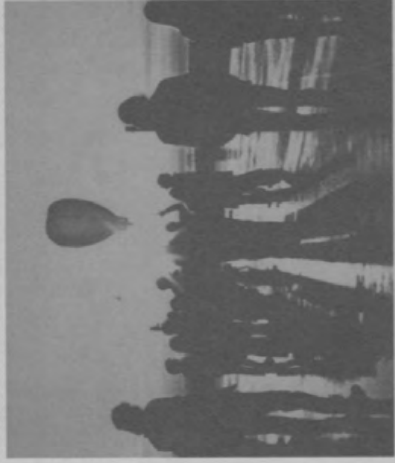


FIG. 8



FIG. 9



FIG. 10



FIG. 11



FIG. 12