

In memoriam
George Maciunas



1931 - 1978

KLAVIERDUETT
Joseph Beuys & Nam June Paik

Fluxus-Soirée der Galerie René Block in der
Aula der Staatlichen Kunstakademie
Düsseldorf

Freitag, 7. Juli 1978, 20 Uhr



Susanne Titz, Director;
box catalogue Joseph Beuys, 9/13-10/29/1967,
Städtisches Museum Mönchengladbach

Felicia Rappe, head of collections, and
Denise Wegener, research assistant

Bianca Grüger, inventory freelancer; Joseph Beuys,
Ollflasche [Oil Bottle], 1984 and Intuition [Intuition], 1968

Museum Abteiberg, teaching room

Joseph Beuys archival materials

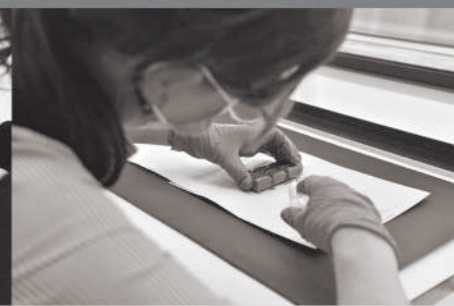
Christine Adolphs, conservator; Joseph Beuys,
Zwei Fräulein mit leuchtendem Brot
[Two Young Women with Shining Bread], 1966

Susanne Rennert, ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE
scholarly advisor, and Susanne Titz, director;
Joseph Beuys, Aggregat [Aggregate], 1962

Restoration of Joseph Beuys,
Zwei Fräulein mit leuchtendem Brot
[Two Young Women with Shining Bread], 1966

Bianca Grüger, inventory freelancer;
Joseph Beuys, Intuition [Intuition], 1968

Joseph Beuys, Die Wirtschaftswörterbuch
PRINZIPLE 2 (Wording), 1980



Detailed view of the library holdings



Collecting - Acquisition of the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE

How does a museum decide which acquisitions to make, and which donations to accept? For the acquisition of Erik Andersch's extraordinary set of materials, it was the history of the Mönchengladbach museum and the multifaceted possibilities for connection to the existing collection that were decisive. The acquisition was preceded by intensive research: art historian Susanne Rennert has been engaged with the history and widely ramified networks of Fluxus for many years. Against the backdrop of her close contact with the collector and her knowledge of his collection, she recommended long-term relocation to the Museum Abteiberg.

Beginning in 1968, Erik and Dorothee Andersch were in close friendly exchange with many artists whose works were shown by Johannes Cladders, at that time director of the Städtisches Museum Abteiberg, who also acquired works for the museum's collection: for example, Joseph Beuys's *Aggregat* [Aggregate] in 1967 and *Revolutionsklavier* [Revolution Piano] in 1969. Objects by Fluxus artists Robert Filliou and George Brecht also entered the public and private collection around this time. Not least, it is this historical connection that moved Erik Andersch – then member of the Museumsverein Mönchengladbach and collector of the box catalogues published by Cladders – to entrust his holdings to the Museum Abteiberg.

"The objects and especially the contemporary documents from the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE point to the context, time, and space behind significant works in the Mönchengladbach collection" (Susanne Titz, director of the Museum Abteiberg). At the same time, it fills in gaps from the 1960s to the 1980s: positions of artists like Dorothy Iannone, Alison Knowles, and Takako Saito add to the collection with large sets of materials. These connections were also convincing to sponsors of the acquisition.

Documenting and Researching

"I want to make museums into universities, with a department for objects." (Joseph Beuys)*

After the acquisition of the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE, the research process in the collection department of the Museum Abteiberg began with documentation: What information about the objects and contemporary documents was already on hand? Like a professional archivist, Erik Andersch proceeded with extreme care, for decades keeping precise records regarding the origin and context of his collection. What memories did he relay orally in the moments when he passed his collection over to the museum, step by step? Development of a feasible system for assigning inventory numbers went hand in hand with documentation. Only with an inventory number can museum objects be linked to the corresponding information.

All of this is necessary so that academics, artists, and everyone who is interested can continue to work with the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE in the future. There are many starting points for research: the network-like connections of the international art scene of the Rhineland in the 1960s and 1970s can be explored reciprocally through the art collection, library, and archive, along with a rich array of personal correspondence. Large sets of materials from individual artists invite research as well. Not least, the history of Erik Andersch's collection will itself be an object of research. The museum will in turn incorporate research results into its continuously expanding documentation, with research as a permanent, collective, and open process.

Systematizing and Making an Inventory

Fluxus moves in interstices. Traditional genres of art like "painting" or "sculpture" are not effective: boxes with action cards or objects such as the *Adventskalender* [Advent Calendar] (1971) on display here, designed by 24 artists, defy familiar categories; the dividing line between art, everyday object, and political action is blurry (Beuys founded the "Deutsche Studenten Partei [German Students Party] in 1967). Processing the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE, the museum team is faced with a seemingly contradictory task: to organize and categorize.

The museum's central organizational instrument is the inventory number. For the set of materials from Erik Andersch, it was necessary to develop a separate system in order to simultaneously represent its historical cohesiveness and do justice to the broad spectrum of all included elements. In dialogue with other art archives and academics, the team developed a three-part system. Based on this system, Beuys's *Rose für direkte Demokratie* [Rose for Direct Democracy] (1973), for example, bears the inventory number A-II-3: "A" represents origin in Erik Andersch's collection, the Roman numeral stands for one out of a total of 17 categories – the II is for "multiple" – and consecutive numbering follows in the last position.

Each object in the collection and each document in the archive is assigned a number according to this system, photographed, and then entered into a database and inventory register along with all of its basic information. The inventory number is an organizational and search tool for internal work and external research: organizing in order to facilitate use, and in order to expand knowledge about Fluxus. Organizing in order to keep the holdings in motion.

Preserving and Maintaining

The objective of maintaining the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE in the long run also determines the work of the restoration department. Challenges lie in the particularity of this new acquisition: the variety of artists working with completely different processes, and the enormous range of materials between art object and archival document, each requiring individual conservation measures.

Correspondingly, there is a wide spectrum of tasks: procuring appropriate packing material for archival holdings, removing paper clips and staples from documents to avoid rusting, checking the conservation status of the artworks and taking preventative action under certain circumstances. For Beuys's collage *Zwei Fräulein mit leuchtendem Brot* [Two Young Women with Shining Bread], the binding agent with which the artist attached a piece of brown-painted chocolate to paper in 1966 was renewed. The use of everyday, "poor," often organic materials that today can only be defined with difficulty is characteristic of the times for Fluxus, and also to be found in the work of Dieter Roth or Daniel Spoerri. How can these components of the works be maintained in the long run when their exact composition is unclear, or when the process of decomposition is indeed part of the artistic concept?

Digitizing the many multimedia objects is an additional task, as well as regularly transferring the recordings onto up-to-date storage media. Yet in the art of the 1960s, there are often mixed forms. For example, Joseph Beuys's multiple *Ja Ja Ja Ja Ja, Ne Ne Ne Ne Ne* [Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes, No No No No No] (1969) situates itself between an audio document and an object: a tape documenting an event with Henning Christiansen and Johannes Stüttgen at the Düsseldorf Art Academy in 1968 is integrated into a stack of felt panels. With Fluxus, the exception is the rule.

WORKSHOP REPORT ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE (BEUYS)

June 3 to October 24, 2021

In 2017, with support from the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States, state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Kunststiftung NRW, and Hans Fries Foundation, the Museum Abteiberg acquired one of the most internationally comprehensive Fluxus collections: the art collection, archive, and library of Erik Andersch (1940–2021). The artists represented in this collection belonged to the inner circle and extended milieu of the international Fluxus movement, or shared a view developed by the movement beginning in the 1960s in the USA, Europe, and Japan: art is linked to action, community, play, and chance, it is conceptual, intermedial, and humorous, as well as ironic and critical toward traditions of the museum and art history. Artistic praxis involves the social, societal, and political spheres.

The team at the Museum Abteiberg is currently engaged in processing this new addition through documentation and inventory as well as conservation measures. Curated by Felicia Rappe and Denise Wegener, the exhibition *Workshop Report Andersch Collection/Archive (Beuys)* presents these tasks and thematizes related questions: How should the collection, archive, and library be preserved, exhibited, and communicated in the long run, and how should research be made accessible?

In 2021, on the occasion of the 100th birthday of Joseph Beuys, the museum is offering a first look into these ongoing considerations. Materials by Beuys from the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE make up only a fraction of the total holdings. On the basis of this set of materials, the exhibition is activating a new format at the Museum Abteiberg: display storage (Schaumagazin).

Joseph Beuys received crucial stimulus from his early contact with the Fluxus group for the development of his expanded concept of art. In her essay "*All of This is Generally Very Flexible*," Susanne Rennert explores the reciprocal relationship between Joseph Beuys and Fluxus, along with the collector Erik Andersch, who like Beuys employed the Fluxus concept in an open way.

Storing and Exhibiting - Display Storage (Schaumagazin)

Alongside temporary exhibitions, the collection is shown in rotating presentations throughout 3,500 m² of the Museum Abteiberg, designed by Hans Hollein. Most of the artworks are stored in depositories.

For the newly acquired ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE, the museum is planning a long-term combination of storing and exhibiting with a display storage format. A storage system of this kind makes it possible to safely preserve holdings while at the same time presenting them amid the exhibition space. The diversity of the holdings – unique items and multiples, postcards, posters, photographs, audio and video documents, books and archival documents – can be made accessible in one place within an overall context, reflecting the fact that all of this belonged together inextricably for Erik Andersch in the decades of his activity as a collector; similarly, for Fluxus, there were fluid borders and transitions between art objects and remnants of an action, between catalogue and artist's book, graphic print and advertising poster, between viewing and use. The exhibition *Workshop Report Andersch Collection/Archive* tries out the format of display storage with material by Joseph Beuys.

Display storage links the objectives of preserving the products of (art) history and simultaneously making them as accessible as possible for viewing, discussion, and research. This aim coincides with Beuys's conviction that "...museums are also organisms insofar as they change. [...] As a result of different people entering, museums will always handle things differently. After all, this is a thing that changes." (Joseph Beuys)*

Programming

"Sometimes you can practice this in the museum, talking about things in a small group. In that moment, the museum is good again." (Joseph Beuys)*

Communication and education were already conceived as crucial tasks when the concept for the Museum Abteiberg was being developed during the 1970s, with spaces for different formats: a lecture hall, teaching room, and audiovisual room are centrally integrated into the exhibition areas, as well as a painting class. Arts education is communication, a movement that we shape together with our visitors. We understand arts education in a dialogical, process-oriented way.

Exhibition Discussions, *Workshop Report Andersch Collection/Archive (Beuys)* [in German]

Thursday, June 17, 4 p.m.
Christine Adolphs, conservator, and Achim Hirdes, Museum Abteiberg exhibition technician

Thursday, July 15, 6 p.m.
Bianca Grüger, artist and inventory freelancer, and Karl Heinz Rummeny, artist and curator

Thursday, September 16, 6 p.m.
Felicia Rappe and Denise Wegener, curators of the exhibition

Thursday, October 21, 6 p.m.
Susanne Rennert, ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE scholarly advisor, and Susanne Titz, director of the Museum Abteiberg

Tours of the two exhibitions for *Institutional Critique – the Museum as a Site of Permanent Conference (J.B): Ghislaine Leung. Portraits*, and *Workshop Report Andersch Collection/Archive (Beuys)* [in German]

Sunday, June 20, 11:30 a.m. / Ulrike Engelke

Sunday, July 18, 11:30 a.m. / Caroline Eick

Sunday, August 15, 11:30 a.m. / Astrid Opitz

Summer school for children and young people during summer vacation
Workshops and tours for school groups

Current information at www.museum-abteiberg.de
Contact: Henrike Robert (+49 (0)2161 252636; robert@museum-abteiberg.de)

Colophon

This booklet accompanies the exhibition *Workshop Report Andersch Collection/Archive (Beuys)*. This exhibition is part of the project *Institutional Critique – the Museum as a Site of Permanent Conference (J.B)*, in the framework of the "beuys 2021" anniversary year. The Museum Abteiberg is simultaneously showing the exhibition *Ghislaine Leung. Portraits*.

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*Joseph Beuys in an interview with Frans Haks in December 1975, in: Joseph Beuys, Frans Haks, *Das Museum. Ein Gespräch über seine Aufgaben, Möglichkeiten, Dimensionen...*, Wangen 1993.

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In the context of scholarly research projects, appointments to view materials contained in *Workshop Report Andersch Collection/Archive (Beuys)* can be arranged upon request: archiv@museum-abteiberg.de

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beuys
2021

Ministerium für
Kultur und Wissenschaft
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen



HANS FRIES
STIFTUNG

M
useumverein
Abteiberg e.V.

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Susanne Rennert, ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE
scholarly advisor; Joseph Beuys, *Adventskalender*
[Advent Calendar], 1971



Felicia Rappe, head of collections,
and Denise Wegener, research assistant





Erik Andersch (1940-2021), Neuss 2018, Photo: Susanne Rennert

“All of this is generally very flexible”

ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE, FLUXUS and JOSEPH BEUYS

Susanne Rennert

1. Fluxus Collector Erik Andersch

“Yes, he was a wonderful man. His cheerfulness in every circumstance was extraordinary, as well as his kindness towards so many artists.”¹ (Dorothy Iannone)

Erik Andersch was born on September 5, 1940, in Düsseldorf, on the same day as the guiding spirit of Fluxus, John Cage (1912-1992), as the collector enjoyed mentioning. After elementary school and trade school, Andersch – who was related to the writer Alfred Andersch – trained as a financial business administrator at the Düsseldorf tax office beginning in 1956. (“They were horrified when I quit.”) At 22, he passed the aptitude examination of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, and went on to study pedagogy. Starting in 1965, he worked as a secondary school teacher in Düsseldorf-Garath, Düsseldorf’s largest social housing project of the 1960s. Postgraduate studies in therapeutic pedagogy and special education followed from 1967 to 1969 at the University of Cologne. Andersch subsequently returned to Garath, where he worked as a teacher at a school for students with “learning disabilities and behavioral difficulties” until 1990.

Additionally, in the mid-1960s he took over the leadership of the “Rainbow” student residence in Düsseldorf, founded – by the Lebanese Dominican Sheikh Malik and the “Afro-Asian Working Group” – with the objective of renting rooms to foreign students who otherwise would have had little chance in the Düsseldorf housing market. The student residence was located on Hoffeldstraße in Düsseldorf-Flingern until 1968. The first artists to be hosted by Erik and Dorothee Andersch were Robert and Marianne Filliou, who stayed there immediately after their arrival from the South of France. After relocation of the residence to Kopernikusstraße in Düsseldorf-Bilk, the Andersch family moved into a bungalow on the grounds with sons Marcel and Martin. This spot in particular became legendary as a refuge and central contact point for many international artists: artists including George Brecht, Robin Page, Nam June Paik, and Takako Saito, among others, lived and worked for months at a time in the student residence that Erik Andersch led until 1988, as well as in the Andersch’s home. In addition to providing a practical contribution to their livelihood, this earned Erik and Dorothee Andersch the highest recognition and appreciation of many artists. Andersch: “They could always live with us. The artists all felt at home. And when we could do something for them, we did it. [...] Robert, George, Dorothy, Takako, Paik: they were true friends – like family.”²

How did Erik Andersch get into collecting? He was passionately interested in literature and contemporary history, and even before his first art purchases he collected complete series of affordable paperbacks that had come onto the market in the 1950s. In 1965, after his exams, he acquired his first two artworks from the Düsseldorf Kunstverein, graphics by Antoni Tàpies and Johannes Itten. At that point he already had contacts in the Düsseldorf art scene, for example sharing his office at the tax office for a few months with Sigmar Polke when Polke had a job there during his art academy studies. But the real start of Andersch’s obsessive activity as a collector was marked by a chance encounter with Daniel Spoerri and Dorothy Iannone one morning in the Düsseldorf Altstadt in May 1968. Erik and Dorothee Andersch were thus absorbed into the extraordinary circle of friends that intellectualized and internationalized the Düsseldorf art scene (as well as the music and advertising scenes) between 1968 and 1974, with Spoerri, Iannone, and Dieter Roth following the snowball principle.³ In parallel with the artistic and political activities around Joseph Beuys, and against the backdrop of student unrest in the pulsing environment of the art academy, it was this cosmopolitan group of conceptually and intermedially oriented artists who decisively contributed to Düsseldorf’s development around 1970 into a “middle European metropolis of artists,” thanks to “a lucky constellation of objective economic coordinates and subjective initiatives,” and “a radius drawing (artists and artistic activities) from Antwerp, Amsterdam, Scandinavia, Vienna, Bern” (Georg Jappe). With these artists, there was a kind of reactivation of the “spirit of Fluxus,” which had already become so distinctly manifest in Düsseldorf in the formative years of the Fluxus movement (*Neo-Dada in der Musik* [Neo-Dada in Music], 1962; *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus*, 1963). At the same time, some of the artists represented in Erik Andersch’s collection (such as Page, Roth, or Iannone) do not really belong to the multidisciplinary Fluxus network initiated in 1961/62 by American-Lithuanian Fluxus founder George Maciunas. Beuys, too, represents a special case. “I always saw the Fluxus concept somewhat more expansively,” affirmed Erik Andersch, who used the Fluxus label in an open manner, similarly to Joseph Beuys, who employed it in an explicitly strategic way. Beuys in 1966: “Beuys is the only one in Germany to continue to use the name FLUXUS invented by George Maciunas for his work, as well as for his further developed demonstrations, which are alien to the original FLUXUS circle of ideas.”⁴

Andersch himself did not experience the early Fluxus actions and concerts in the Rhineland (1962-1964), which radically and playfully lifted the boundaries between different artistic disciplines (music, visual arts, poetry, theater, etc.), liquifying all accepted concepts of aesthetic, academic, and institutional praxis, and inspiring many art academy students in addition to Beuys, such as Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter, Konrad Lueg, or Jörg Immendorff. For Andersch, the process that linked the praxis of life, work, and collecting began in 1968; ultimately, “Fluxus and Friends” had a particular way of living the burning themes of the times – individual and collective freedom, equal rights, anarchy and absence of hierarchy. As a free spirit and anarchistic pedagogue, Erik Andersch was especially attracted to the humorous, paradoxical (in the sense of higher wisdom), and subversive aspects of Fluxus. From a professional perspective alone, and in parallel with the emancipatory context of the day, he was interested in all forms of anti-authoritarian knowledge transfer and democratic information “sharing.” This interest was also in parallel with Joseph Beuys, Dieter Roth, and Robert Filliou, whose perpetually relevant book *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, developed in participative processes with Beuys, Roth, and others, was published in 1970 during Filliou’s time in Düsseldorf.⁵

In this way, over many decades, an information cosmos emerged that is as diverse as it is homogeneous; more than other collections, it can be viewed as its own work in the sense of a “Permanent Creation” (Filliou). Again and again, the collection circles around a central thought: understanding art not as “work” and as commodity, but rather as action, attitude, and “existential illumination” (Köpcke).

Erik Andersch continued this work to the last. Exactly 50 years after *Filliou’s Hand Show* became the first work in the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE, the collection was transferred to the Museum Abteiberg in the summer of 2018, adding an elementary piece to the museum’s own collection.

Erik and Dorothee Andersch, who began collaborating as kindred spirits in the 1950s, spent the winter months living on the Canary Island of La Gomera starting in 1990. Erik Andersch died there on February 1, 2021.

2. ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE and Joseph Beuys

Alongside the Sohm Archive (Staatsgalerie Stuttgart) and the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives (MoMA, New York), the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE is one of the three most significant and dense collections worldwide for Fluxus and the neighboring intermedial areas. Its material stands for critical thinking, participatory approaches, collective social processes, and global “Eternal Network” (Brecht/Filliou), offering a reservoir of substantial content that is more current than ever against the sociopolitical backdrop of the present. Certain highlights stand out among the collection’s many focal points: nearly complete holdings of historical Fluxus documents and materials – for example, all early *Boxes*, *Newsletters*, and *Newspapers of Fluxus Edition* – built above all through processes of giving, exchange, and reciprocal supplementation with fellow Fluxus collectors and friends such as Hanns Sohm (Sohm Archive, today: Staatsgalerie Stuttgart) and Hermann Braun (today: Braun/Lieff Collection, Museum Ostwall at the Dortmund U). In addition, there are particularly comprehensive groups of works and sets of documents from George Brecht, Robert Filliou, Dorothy Iannone, Dieter Roth, Takako Saito, and Joseph Beuys.

The Beuys collection is interesting mostly on the basis of numerous multiples, documents signed by Beuys for Andersch, ephemera, and – from the perspective of art history – a fascinatingly complete library with many rare books. The absence of major, spectacular multiples such as *Schlitten* [Sled] (1969) or *Silberbesen und Besen ohne Haare* [Silver Broom and Broom without Bristles] (1972) – both Edition Block, Berlin – points to Andersch’s limited financial radius of action as a teacher. (For comparison: the entrepreneur Karl Ströher acquired almost all of the works that Beuys showed in 1967 in his legendary exhibition at the Städtisches Museum Mönchengladbach.) Erik Andersch primarily collected *information*. In this he followed his model Hanns Sohm, the world’s first Fluxus collector, who in the mid-1960s dedicated himself to the systematic documentation of ephemeral materials, thus paradoxically creating the prototype of an institution as someone outside of institutions.

The ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE also originally included an extensive set of works by Nam June Paik, which the collector gave to the Nam June Paik Art Center in Korea in 2010. Paik and Andersch became friends when Paik took over the professorship for video arts at the Düsseldorf Art Academy in 1979. It was Paik who inducted Beuys into the Fluxus group in 1962, and as a kindred spirit, he represents the central complement to Beuys to a certain extent.⁶ In this case it would be necessary for the institutions in Mönchengladbach and Seoul to network for research purposes.

One of the unique features of the Andersch collection is its special proximity to Düsseldorf as a place where the international avant-garde intertwined with regional, and local artistic manifestations already in the 1950s. Above all through the productive competition of gallerists Jean-Pierre Wilhelm – a key figure for Fluxus, who discovered Nam June Paik – and Alfred Schmela – later the gallerist for Joseph Beuys – significant artistic processes became organized and crystallized at an early point. In diverse ways, the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE documents the strong reactivation of the conceptual and intermedial stimuli of Fluxus in the surroundings of the Düsseldorf Art Academy beginning in 1968, stimuli that had first manifested with actions in the Rhineland (often disturbing to the public and for the most part negatively received by the press) beginning in 1962 (*Kleines Sommerfest – Après John Cage* [Little Summer Festival], Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, June 9, 1962; *Neo-Dada in der Musik* [Neo-Dada in Music], Kammerspiele Düsseldorf, June 16, 1962; *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus*, Düsseldorf Art Academy, February 2/3, 1963; *Festival der Neuen Kunst, 20. Juli* [Festival of New Art, July 20], TH Aachen, July 20, 1964).⁷

At the same time, in a specific way, the collection also links Joseph Beuys’s individual position to the context of Fluxus. For Beuys, professor of sculpture at the Düsseldorf Art Academy beginning in 1961, the encounter with Fluxus had a strong catalyzing and transforming effect. In 1962/63 a decisive change took place for the artist, who until then had worked in sculpture and drawing: this change involved his choice of media (actions, later multiples), materials (date of the first *Fettecke* [Fat Corner]: 1962) and methods, including later his offensive and provocative way of dealing with the public and the press. In turn, Beuys represented something like a home base for Fluxus in Düsseldorf during the formative early Fluxus years. In the circle of the Fluxus “core group”, this repeatedly gave rise to criticism, as the image of the movement was thus outwardly shaped in a relatively one-sided manner, especially in West Germany. In 1993 Danish Fluxus artist Eric Andersen expressed it aptly as follows: “For many years Joseph Beuys was the big hero of Fluxus and in fact he was never really associated with Fluxus but he was the hero. So that was the way a lot of people saw Fluxus.”⁸ On the other hand, it was Joseph Beuys who helped Fluxus to gain immense resonance, risking a great deal in the process. In contrast to colleagues at the academy such as the painters K.O. Götz or Gerhard Hoehme, he was one of the few at the time to recognize the progressive utopian potential of the movement, which carried in its name the fluctuating “plastic principle” (fluxus, Latin fluere = flow): art as a processual and permanently self-renewing occurrence, without determinant fixation on the (historically fraught) past. Beuys: “This is a concept of art that no longer hangs on the wall but plays out in space, that is expressed in conversations or deeds, taking place in actions and no longer bound to the museum.”⁹

When asked about his connections to Beuys, Erik Andersch remarked: “Beuys was always here in Düsseldorf; already in 1963 he performed with Spoerri at *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus*, or with Filliou in 1964 at the Aachen event on July 20. I later visited Beuys with Robert [Filliou] twice. But I also saw and met Beuys every now and then in any case. Either I wanted to get a few books signed ... or he was doing his political stuff in the office on Andreasstraße and said: ‘Come on and help me.’ Then I would help to set up or things like that. [...] We were all just together a lot at the time. With meeting places like Creamcheese, the Spoerri bar ... everyone always met up there [beginning in 1968].”

Andersch’s contact with Beuys was far more loosely woven than that between Beuys and collector friend Wolfgang Feelisch, however. With Feelisch, publisher of VICE Versand, Remscheid, Beuys began to release the famous *Intuition* wooden boxes in unlimited number in 1968. In the context of Beuys’s multiples, *Intuition* plays a central role as a spiritual information carrier.

3. Fluxus and Joseph Beuys

“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.”¹⁰ (George Maciunas, *Fluxus Manifesto*, 1963)

In 2021 the 100th birthday of Joseph Beuys coincides with the 60th anniversary of the initiation of Fluxus by George Maciunas (1931-1978). The Lithuanian-American artist, designer, and architect drafted his visionary concept of Fluxus as a supra-national network already in 1961 in New York, but at first he was planning a publication project. Beginning in the summer of 1962, he started to implement the concept as an action project in Europe, with a loosely connected international group of artists doing intermedial work. The Berlin Wall – a physical materialization of the Cold War – had been built shortly before Maciunas came to Wiesbaden in 1961 to work as a graphic designer for the US Army. The Eichmann trial took place in Jerusalem in the same year, 16 years after the end of the Second World War and, with the Holocaust, the opening of “an abyss,” in the words of Hannah Arendt.¹¹ Against the backdrop of existential ruptures and global political upheaval, the question of art’s relevance in the societal reality of “corrupted togetherness” took on entirely new significance. In the context of this sociopolitical constellation, Maciunas – like many Fluxus artists, shaped by key experiences of emigration and exile – developed his idea of Fluxus as a global, multidisciplinary, democratic network long before the concept of networks was used for organizational structures outside of engineering and technology. The various intermedial currents in the USA, Europe, and Japan had yet to find a forum at the beginning of the 1960s, and through his enormous engagement, Maciunas succeeded in channeling them into his Fluxus project. The global dimension of the project was already manifest in the first publication, the *Fluxus Brochure Prospectus for Fluxus Yearboxes* (1962). Here, in an organigram, Fluxus is represented as an international organization constituted of “committee,” “chairman,” and numerous international sections: “US section, German section, Scandinavian section, French section, Austrian section, English section, Japanese section and Canadian section.” In 1962 the first actions took place in Wuppertal and Düsseldorf, and the first festivals and concerts explicitly titled with the Fluxus label were held in Wiesbaden, London, Copenhagen, and Paris. Tomas Schmit, who like Nam June Paik belonged to the “original core group” (Dick Higgins) of Fluxus from the beginning, observed: “In the early European period of Fluxus, the European and the American aspects complemented each other to become something very unusual and new. Later it became dreadfully silly. [...] But the core of the matter cannot be overestimated.”¹²

One of the remarkable approaches of Fluxus was to bring together protagonists from entirely different professional backgrounds, nationalities, and gender identities under a shared label. Differently than in the Zero group, the starting point for many Fluxus artists was not the visual arts but music, literature, and academics in the form of diverse disciplines.

To understand the multi-perspectival, multi-professional nature of the movement, it is eminently important to keep in mind that George Brecht had originally worked as a chemist, Robert Filliou as an economist, Robert Watts as an engineer, Daniel Spoerri as a dancer in a theater, or that Takako Saito came from the field of education. Fluxus can be best grasped as a widely ramified sociological research project, in which the actors operated in a complex system of open circuits. As in a think tank, the information that flowed in was subsequently processed and developed alone or collectively. This aspect is especially interesting with respect to Joseph Beuys and Fluxus, as Beuys’s affinity for music and the natural sciences met with immediate interest. The conceptual, anti-commercial, and anti-institutional orientation of Fluxus is another central aspect. As a groundbreaker for conceptual art, Fluxus radically altered the well-rehearsed postures of producers and recipients; rather than “art” as a materially utilizable end product, the emphasis was on self-determined, self-responsible activity subjected to active consciousness. Viewers were involved in creative processes with entirely open outcomes. Fluxus relied on the reciprocity of the sender/receiver principle. Nam June Paik: “One way communication is a dictate.”¹³ This thought is particularly revealing in light of the development and contextualization of Beuys’s ideas: Beuys’s call for independent thinkers (“Anyone who doesn’t want to think will be thrown out”) – as well as his significant statement “Everyone is an artist” – should be viewed against the backdrop of the early conceptual stimuli transported by the minimalist instruction pieces of so many Fluxus artists. For example: La Monte Young: *Composition 1960 # 10 to Bob Morris: Draw a straight line and follow it. October 1960*; Yoko Ono: *Beat Piece: Listen to a heart beat, 1963 Autumn*; Arthur Kørpcke: *fill: with own imagination, 1963*; Dick Higgins: *Danger Music Number Fifteen – for the dance – Work with eggs and butter for a time, May 1962*.

Beuys came into contact with George Maciunas and the Fluxus group in 1962 through Nam June Paik. Paik had been experimenting in the Studio for Electronic Music of West German Broadcasting (WDR) Cologne since 1958, and he performed his rousing action music *Hommage à John Cage – Musik für Tonbänder und Klavier* [Music for magnetic tapes and piano] in 1959 in Jean-Pierre Wilhelm’s Galerie 22 in Düsseldorf. During the event Neo-Dada in der Musik [Neo-Dada in Music] (Kammerspiele Düsseldorf, June 16, 1962), initiated by Paik and his mentor Wilhelm, Beuys reacted very directly to Paik’s action *One for Violin (Solo)*; in a short, cathartic act, Paik smashed a violin on a table with great force. When a musician from the Städtisches Orchester who was sitting in the audience reacted with foolish laughter, he was unceremoniously removed from the auditorium by Joseph Beuys and Konrad Klapheck. (A local newspaper subsequently reported on the incident under the headline “Neo-Dada with Bouncer: Midnight Spook with Tour de Force at the Kammerspiele.”) Following this event, Beuys took the initiative to suggest an action at the Düsseldorf Art Academy to Paik. Maciunas wrote to Paik soon after: “Dear N.J.P. [...] 2. Can you please send me the address of that Düsseldorf man of Kunsthochschule or what – the man with the wig. I took his address from your book but lost the scrap of paper. OK?”¹⁴ And he wrote to Beuys: “Dear Mr. Beuys [...] I have heard from Nam June Paik who in turn has heard from Mr. [K.O.] Götz of the interesting sculptures you make. Could you send us some photographs? Possibly we could include such photographs in Fluxus II? (along with some notes of you?) I was very glad to have made your acquaintance in Düsseldorf and hope to see you again maybe during the Fluxus festival in Düsseldorf if such a thing can be arranged.”¹⁵

The following year, along with Maciunas (and Paik), Beuys organized the legendary *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus* that took place on February 2/3 in the main auditorium of the Düsseldorf Art Academy. Previously a loner who was not widely known – “an eccentric Hermit” (Paik)¹⁶ – Beuys went public with actions for the first time here (*Sibirische Symphonie, 1. Satz* [Siberian Symphony, First Movement] and *Komposition für 2 Musikanten* [Composition for 2 Musicians]).¹⁷ The festival paved new paths for Beuys. Erwin Heerich, who had already studied with Beuys in Ewald Matarés’s class at the art academy, observed: “The encounter with Fluxus gave a seriously different meeting to the Beuysian question of art and life. There he saw a current of life that unleashed something new in him – the other side of Beuys came to light, his strong sense and strong talent for the public, medial.”¹⁸ In the autumn of 1963, when Joseph Beuys presented his “Stable Exhibition in Haus van der Grinten” with the title *Josef Beuys: FLUXUS*, George Maciunas left Germany to return to New York. There, in the framework of *Fluxus Edition*,

he increasingly devoted himself to the publication of informational texts such as the *Fluxus Policy Newsletters* and the production of edition objects and prototypes for multiples, with the aim of undermining conventional production mechanisms of art and establishing new distribution systems in the art market, which was evolving rapidly as a result of pop art. Maciunas focused on enlightenment through information: like Nam June Paik, he recognized early on that the transformation of Western industrial societies into the technological information society of the future was underway. One of the many interesting aspects of the history of Fluxus, also with respect to Beuys, is how strategically Maciunas operated as a kind of intellectual advertising professional, thereby linking completely opposed political worldviews.¹⁹ On the one hand, he conceived of Fluxus in resolute engagement with communist theories as an “international unity front against the bourgeois art scene,” while on the other hand, he used capitalist marketing strategies in order to publicize Fluxus as a brand. This also included his remarkably offensive way of dealing with the press.²⁰

Recalling Beuys’s skillful navigation of the founding of the German Students Party in 1967 – the press was invited, even though the party program was not set in writing – the proximity to Maciunas’s strategic praxis is evident. The letters that Maciunas wrote ahead of the *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus* to among others Joseph Beuys demonstrate how individual sentences and passages are situated as if in a manifesto. Differently than Maciunas, who in the formative Fluxus years formulated many concepts only theoretically, in the course of the 1960s Beuys developed into an artist who implemented ideas in deeds. Maciunas, Paik, and Beuys formed a kind of magical triangle, considering art, media, society, and politics in completely new contexts and from a non-Eurocentric perspective; this is highly interesting, but it is a different topic.

To conclude: even if it was the expanded concept of art of the intermedial Fluxus movement that later formed the conceptual basis for Joseph Beuys’s expanded concept of art, the proximity to Fluxus should not be overemphasized. Ultimately, Beuys’s extraordinary oeuvre represents an entirely individual and essentially universal cosmos that carries many influences within it. Beuys’s work is also far removed from the minimalistic austerity and putative banality of many Fluxus conceptions. However, like the remarkably intellectual group of Fluxus artists, Beuys employed language as a central material and used it to form his new concepts. Like no other artist in the 20th century, Beuys also made the plasticity of these concepts vivid.

“I am interested in the dissemination of physical vehicles in the form of editions, because I am interested in the dissemination of ideas. The objects are only comprehensible in connection with my ideas. What happens in my political work has a different effect on people because there is such a product than if were to come across only through written words. Even if the products may not appear to be at all suitable to bring about political changes, more comes from them, I think, than if the ideas could be read on them directly”²¹ (Joseph Beuys, 1970).

1) Dorothy Iannone, email to the author, February 10, 2021.

2) Erik Andersch in conversation with the author, Neuss, July 4, 2018. The following quotes also come from this interview or another interview conducted on December 13, 2017.

3) This circle included George Brecht, Robert and Marianne Filliou, the “Swiss faction” with Daniel Spoerri, André and Eva Thomkins, Karl Gerstner (co-owner of the ad agency GGK, which Spoerri had encouraged to open the restaurant in Düsseldorf), as well as Dieter Roth and the US-American artist Dorothy Iannone, Japanese Fluxus artist Takako Saito, Swedish artist Erik Dietman, Canadian artist Robin Page, his wife Carol, etc.

4) Joseph Beuys, handwritten resume composed for the interview project “Ateliervesprache” (1966) by Dieter Hülsmanns and Friedolin Reske, copy, private collection, Düsseldorf.

5) Roth, who became professor of graphic arts at the Düsseldorf Art Academy in 1968 through Beuys’s intercession, had already worked as a teacher in the USA, exercising his principle of “non-teaching as teaching,” which is also revealing with respect to Beuys’s pedagogical praxis. In 1969 Friedrich Wolfram Heubach published his famous interview with Beuys on the ideal academy in which Beuys asserted: “The professor has perhaps no other function than that of the string which you dip in a sugar solution to make rock candy, as something organizes itself and crystallizes on it” (Interfunktionen 2, 1969, p. 62.)

6) See Stephan von Wiese, “‘YOU MARTYR of July 20, 1964’ Paik and Beuys in a Media Duet,” in: Sook-Kyung Lee/ Susanne Rennert (eds.), *Nam June Paik*, Tate Publishing, London 2010, p. 127.

7) Susanne Rennert, “‘Fluxus could not exist without Wilhelm. (Paik)’ Jean-Pierre Wilhelm and the Beginnings of the Fluxus Movement in Germany (1962–63),” in: Susanne Rennert/ Sylvia Martin/ Erika Wilton (eds.), “Le hasard fait bien les choses.” Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, *Informel, Fluxus and Galerie 22*, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne 2013, pp. 110–159.

8) Eric Andersen in conversation with the author, Copenhagen, August 24, 1993.

9) Beuys in Tom Molenaars, “De aktie is een uit elkaar genomen skulptuur. Interview met Joseph Beuys,” in: *Metropolis M*, no. 3, 1984, cited in Uwe M. Schneede, *Joseph Beuys, Die Aktionen. Kommentiertes Werkverzeichnis mit fotografischen Dokumentationen*, Verlag Gerd Hatje, Ostfildern-Ruit 1990, p. 11.

10) The “Manifesto” was produced by Beuys in 1963, commissioned by Maciunas for “Festum Fluxorum Fluxus”; it was tossed to the audience right at the beginning within the framework Patterson’s “Paper Piece”. In 1970 Beuys used it as a contribution to Armin Hundertmark’s edition “Karton 1”. See Beuys, “Manifest, Text und Plakat”, 1970, multiple no. 16, in: Jörg Schellmann (ed.), *Joseph Beuys. Die Multiples, Edition Schellmann, Munich-New York, Schirmer/Mosel Verlag, Munich 1992*, p. 58.

11) Hannah Arendt, “‘What Remains? The Language Remains’: A Conversation with Günter Gaus,” in: Jerome Kohn (ed.), *Essays in Understanding*, Harcourt Brace & Company, New York 1994, p. 14.

12) Tomas Schmit in conversation with the author, Berlin, February 2, 1992.

13) Cited in Judson Rosebush (ed.), *Nam June Paik. Videa ‘n’ Videology 1959–1973*, exh. cat. Everson Museum of Art, New York 1974, n.p.

14) George Maciunas, letter to Nam June Paik, n.d. [after June 16, 1962], handwritten manuscript, copy, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Sohm Archive.

15) George Maciunas, letter to Joseph Beuys, July 7, 1962, typescript, Joseph Beuys Archive, Stiftung Museum Schloss Moyland.

16) Nam June Paik, *Beuys Vox 1961-86*, Won Gallery/ Hyundai Gallery, Seoul 1990, foreword, n.p.

17) Schneede 1990, pp. 20ff.

18) Erwin Heerich in Heiner Stachelhaus, *Joseph Beuys, Düsseldorf 1987*, p. 162, cited in Schneede 1990, p. 11.

19) Justin Hoffmann, “Fluxus als Label,” lecture held on July 26, 2003 in the framework of the exhibition project conceived by the author, *Fluxus in Düsseldorf 1962/63, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf*, July 19-27, 2003.

20) See also the letter from Maciunas to Beuys, January 1963:

“Dear prof. Beuys:

Thank you very much for your letter of 9.1.1963 which I received today. [...] Our business:

1. February 2 and 3 (Sat. & Sun.) would be very suitable for us. 2. We certainly can arrange Fluxus in 2 concerts. Enclosed is our proposed programme. [...] 5. We would like to suggest that members of the press plus press services such as AP, UPI, Reuters, Tass etc. be invited by letter & complimentary ticket. 6. We also require that the typography ‘Festum Fluxorum’ (of enclosed film) be used in all printed matter. (Publicity & programs). Thanking for your efforts in organizing Festum Fluxorum in Düsseldorf [...]” George Maciunas, letter to Joseph Beuys, n.d. [January 1963], Joseph Beuys Archive, Stiftung Museum Schloss Moyland.

21) Beuys in : Jörg Schellmann/ Bernd Klüser, “Fragen an Joseph Beuys”, in: Schellmann 1992, p. 9.

The Beuys citation in the title, “All of this is generally very flexible,” comes from “Gespräch zwischen Joseph Beuys und Hagen Lieberknecht, geschrieben von Joseph Beuys,” in: Joseph Beuys. Zeichnungen 1947-59 I, Schirmer Verlag, Cologne 1972, p. 11.