

Abstract

"Fluxkids" is a group name that evolved among a particular group of the children of Fluxus artists in and around New York in the 1960s and 1970s. The Fluxkids lived Fluxus in a way unlike anyone else has ever done—they grew up together backstage and in the concert halls of Fluxus performances and at Fluxus exhibitions, as well as at other venues such as Charlotte Moorman's Annual New York Festival of the Avant-Garde. The texts in this article represent a group portrait of the "Fluxkids." Assembled by Hannah Higgins, many of the Fluxkids contributed to this collection. It presents their unique view of Fluxus activities and offers a group portrait of Fluxus as the children of the New York Fluxus artists experienced it. The mutual context of growing-up Fluxus means that they shared similar experiences. As different people from different families, much is unique to each of them and each voice has its own place in this collection.

University of Illinois, Chicago
Visible Language 39:3
Higgins, 248-277

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Rhode Island School of Design
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

FIGURE 1A **Bracken and Tyche Hendricks**
at the Bread and Puppet Theatre, Glover,
Vermont, late 1970s

PHOTOGRAPHER: GEOFFREY HENDRICKS. PRINTED
COURTESY OF THE GEOFFREY HENDRICKS ARCHIVE



HANNAH HIGGINS

(Overview)

THE FIRST TIME I CAME ACROSS

Fluxus in the classroom, I was at Oberlin College in Ohio. The work was described as an extremely far out version of ultra sixties' sex art and political radicalism. As the daughter of *Fluxus* artists Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles, I was shocked—shocked because what I was learning bore virtually no resemblance to my life and because my life bore virtually no resemblance to this description. Now I am a historian of *Fluxus* at the University of Illinois, Chicago, so I guess you could say I have spent the next twenty years trying to make sense of that moment. I think I have in some sort of scholarly way, although there remains personal work

to do. The following accounts of Fluxkids growing up around Fluxus in New York do far more than any academic account I can muster up. These are personal histories conjoined to, even built upon, Fluxus foundations. Perhaps I should say New York Fluxus foundations, as many, many Fluxkids from around the world could not be included...yet. This project has legs, though. I'm sure at another place and time, there will be an even fuller accounting. Thanks go to them all, included or not, for we have all shared in something rather unique (I think) in art history and personal history as well.

FIGURE 1B Barbara and Peter Moore (Photographer) photographing Bread and Puppet Theatre, Glover, Vermont, late 1970s

PHOTOGRAPHER: GEOFFREY HENDRICKS. PRINTED COURTESY OF THE GEOFFREY HENDRICKS ARCHIVE



Bibbi Hansen

DUE TO A LONG AND UGLY CUSTODY BATTLE BETWEEN MY MOTHER AND my father back when I was a toddler, I was rarely allowed to see Al until I was about ten years old and self-reliant enough to sneak off on my own to meet him in coffee shops and movie theaters. One of my favorite regular outings back then was with a group of Al's friends who had gathered together in a loosely-organized group called "The Anonymous Arts Recovery Society." They would meet weekend mornings throughout the year to rescue unique architectural and decorative elements from old buildings that were slated to be demolished. After the building was torn down, these pieces would then be carted off to a deserted yard behind the Brooklyn Museum where the administration had agreed to store the stuff indefinitely. Without the efforts of the Anonymous Arts Recovery Society and the Brooklyn Museum, many wonderful historic pieces of building art would have been smashed and destroyed.

I remember my father and art dealer Ivan Karp going to the superintendent of a condemned building and asking about the demolition plans because they wanted the "heads" from the building. The super hadn't the foggiest what they were talking about. They coaxed him outside to look and pointed out all the precious and fantastic pieces attached to his building. Amazed, he called to his wife and kids to come look! They'd been living in the building forty-two years and had never once noticed the nightmarish man-animals, gargoyles and demons plastered all over the edifice of their home.

Wherever I went from then on, I always stopped and took time to "look" and to "see." I was soon able to easily pick out the patterns like "eggs and arrows" and delighted in the random odd fierce creatures discovered on cornices and keystones. I realized then that one could choose to live consciously.

In the early Sixties, Al was attending Pratt Institute and living on Hall Street in Brooklyn. On one weekend visit with my father, I got to be in a "Happening." It was my first. I had done quite a bit of theater work and acting as a kid, but this was definitely something new. "What'll I do?" I pleaded with him for direction. "What would you like to do?" I hadn't a clue. He took pity on me and gave me a list of activities. I would start out with a large box of bottles and jars and a hammer. I was to carefully break all the available glass one by one in the box. Wow!

After a childhood of scoldings and warnings not to "break stuff"—here was PERMISSION to DESTROY! This was liberation and freedom of the headiest kind. My eyes shone and my breath came faster; I barely heard the rest of the instructions: When the bottles were all broken, I was instructed to get a lit candle and carry it around the performance space singing. "What shall I sing," I asked. "Whatever you want," he answered.

He made a special point of telling me and all the other performers to be very quiet when the dancer began her dance—not to do anything—but we

could start again when she was finished. The performance space was the backyard of the place Al shared with his friend Steve Balkin. The audience sat with their backs to the house while most of the action went on in the rear of the yard and throughout the audience. The dancer was on the roof behind them.

I don't remember the exact sequencing of the events. Two girls made out on a chaise lounge. Larry Poons recited Tristan Tzara's ROAR poem from the Motherwell Dada book. He sat hidden behind a huge sheet of cardboard as he began to read. Someone else—Dick Higgins?—cut a large hole in the cardboard with a knife to reveal Poons to the audience. Larry read by the light of a small campfire and wore a toilet seat around his neck. I broke glass.

Neighborhood kids from adjoining lots had climbed trees surrounding our yard. There were dozens of them. I cannot imagine what the backyard Happening scene looked like to them. At first they contributed cat calls and raspberries, then they began to echo the chant of the Tzara poem in derision: "Roar, roar, ROAR!" As the evening progressed, the hecklers were transformed by the magic and night, and their cries grew earnest and gathered momentum: ROAR! ROAR! ROAR! ROAR! The effect was astonishingly beautiful.

"The Stripper" a pop tune of that time blasted from a record player and we all fell still as Cynthia Mailman began her "dance on the roof a striptease. The audience turned to watch her dance. Al had instructed her to do the strip tease in several sections taking breaks in between to switch the action back down to the yard and other activities. After a minute of dancing she looked for a place to sit and chose a raised section of the roof dead center; she thought this quite the aesthetic place to pause for the next segment.

Unfortunately, the spot she had selected was a skylight and with a loud shattering and splintering of glass, accompanied by a ghastly shriek, Cynthia fell into the back closed porch of my father's house from the roof. Immediately Al rushed to her and upon seeing large pools of blood called for an ambulance and tried to clear the yard and usher people out of the performance. This meant we had to step over Cynthia Mailman's torn body in order to exit.

"Nooooooo!" she shrieked. "I don't want any of them to SEEEME me!" The audience was hustled back into the yard. We, in the Happening—along with the audience—were not entirely sure this was not just "part" of the Happening. We continued to perform. "Roar Roar, Roar!" shouted the kids from the trees. I had done smashing glass and was circling the yard with the candle singing this time. One person wove through the audience trying the feed them dirt, grass, and worms he'd dug from the yard.

The police arrived and we still all thought it was part of the performance. I circled them singing, the women making out tried to get them in a three-way; the dirt guy tried to feed them worms. And still the neighbor kids intoned: "Roar, roar, ROAR!"

Cynthia Mailman wound up in the hospital with hundreds of stitches in her buttocks. Surprisingly she never became angry at my father but received him graciously in her hospital room and remained a friend all his life. I learned then, that art could be quite dangerous, but generous and forgiving as well.

For a while I lived with my father in his loft on Second Street. He was rarely there, but was living most of the time with a girlfriend on 13th Street and Second Avenue. From time to time, different homeless artist friends would stay at that loft. Bill Myers was one. Artist Brooklyn Joe Jones was another. Like Al, Bill also has girlfriends and was rarely at home except to shower and change clothes. This threw Joe Jones and me together a lot. I grew to love his sad look and quiet ways. On my thirteenth birthday, Joe gave me a giant lavishly illustrated "Complete Works of Shakespeare." It might have been the only present I received that year. I loved the Shakespeare and read it cover to cover. I adored it and Joe.

Several times Brooklyn Joe and I took turns almost burning down the loft. He'd fall asleep drunk with a lit cigarette in bed, while I, in the throes of adolescent affectation, as a bedtime ritual, fatuously placed lit cones of incense everywhere and anywhere without a thought. Each time we were woken by angry wet neighbors and our efficient building-wide sprinkler system.

I loved Joe's art. He made robot instruments that played themselves. We owned several of these, but the one I found irresistible was painted completely black—it was a guitar mounted on a small wastebasket. Behind the disposal flap were the controls for the instrument. Two small motors with short wires dangling were suspended just over the strings. The controls left and right operated these and caused each to rotate and pluck the strings. I loved this piece and played with it endlessly.

Every other week our loft would be turned upside down for a Happening. Paying audiences would be admitted and Al would conduct several friends in a time-space performance collage. During one Happening, Al had set up my favorite Joe Jones instrument and it played itself in the middle of the stage as beautiful Meredith Monk danced around it. Bill Meyers periodically shot sparks through a noisy toy raygun at people and ate Cheerios while Al intoned random advertising copy from a current newspaper. For some reason, at one point Meredith thought it a good idea to dance over to Joe's instrument and slowly lower her knee-length hair into the machine. This jammed and ruined the instrument for good and simultaneously caused her hair to suddenly become shoulder-length, as a scissors-wielding Al hacked her free from the "art." Yet another demonstration of the danger inherent in art experimentation.

In our home, art and life mingled and overlapped seamlessly. In 1964 I lived with Al in a loft on Great Jones Street above Charlie Mingus. His music



FIGURE 2 Al Hansen surrounded by Venuses, 1985

PHOTOGRAPHER: LARRY MILLER. PRINTED COURTESY OF LARRY MILLER AND SARA SEAGULL, NEW YORK

was the soundtrack to my time there; I stopped playing records for the duration. I was often left to fend for myself. Sometimes, I would come home to a mysterious and enigmatic sign stuck to our front door:

\$ Behind Marisol

“Marisol” was a large collage Hershey-bar Venus named for artist Marisol Escobar. De-coded the note meant to look behind this particular artwork for money. Sure enough, an envelope would be taped to the back with a five dollar bill inside. This was quickly turned into a salami sandwich at the corner deli. I was never quite certain how long I might be on my own or exactly how long the money would need to be stretched. Once I squandered it on cookies and comics and buying a round of pizza slices for friends. Hungry, I rummaged around the loft and was rewarded with several cans of soup which I rationed and ate over the following days. Unfortunately, these particular cans of soup were “art”: cans of Campbell’s Chicken Soup that had been signed by Andy Warhol.

I remember going to rehearsals with Al for a Dick Higgins play, *The Tart*, that was to be performed in a boxing ring. Another friend of Al’s once commanded a subway train for yet another experimental performance event. I loved the idea that you could subvert locales to other purposes. There was a series of Happenings at the Café Au Go Go; a Greenwich Village nightclub on Bleecker Street. I used to sneak into the Au Go Go regularly to see Oscar Brown Jr., Jimi Hendrix and Lenny Bruce. Now, I was performing there in one



FIGURE 3 Hendricks, Higgins and Mac Low children in West Glover, Vermont, Summer, 1971

PHOTOGRAPHER: GEOFFREY HENDRICKS. PRINTED COURTESY OF THE GEOFFREY HENDRICKS ARCHIVE

of my father's Happenings. On some inspiration all his own, Dick Higgins lifted me onto his shoulders and went roaring and racing around the club. I begged to be let down—he was so incredibly tall and I have always suffered from a fear of “heights”! We think of Nam June as the progenitor of all things MTV and the ideator of the high-speed splinter cut and power density barrage but I remember Nam June doing his “Pillow Piece” that same night at the Café Au Go Go. With a slow, zen-like calm, Nam June quietly destroyed a pillow. I was so impressed by the lyric and determined way he performed and how incredibly beautiful the feathers looked swirling, floating, moving, through air.

In the Sixties Al and Yoko Ono went off to London for the Destruction in Art Symposium—DIAS. I wasn't able to go, but followed the action from afar. Paintings were blown up, art set on fire, instruments were smashed and broken. Rafael Ortiz was there and destroyed a piano. Lil Picard and I watched him attack a baby grand with an ax at the Whitney Museum one day. It was quite something to see; electrifyingly powerful and direct. During one performance at Judson Church, Henry Geldzahler leapt from the audience to rescue a chicken which was about to be beaten to death with a violin.

What a strange group of people who would spend their free time pawing through rubble to rescue art from demolished old buildings, but travel half-way around the world to destroy their own artwork—then I remembered the joy with which I broke all those bottles in that Hall Street Happening so many years ago.

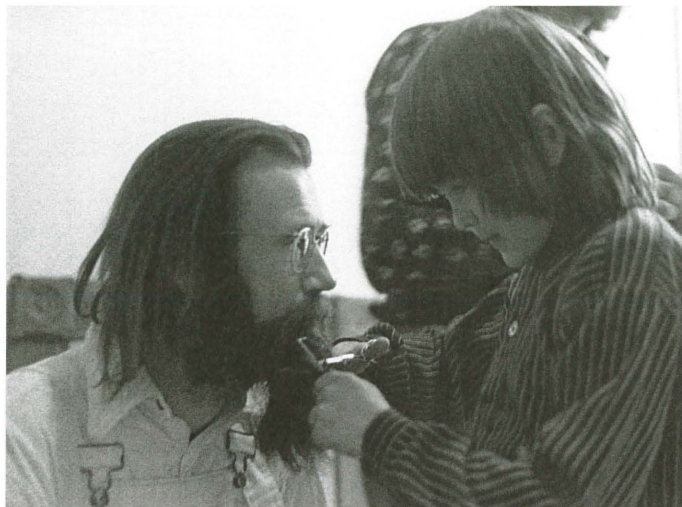


FIGURE 4 Geoffrey Hendricks and Bracken Hendricks, *Unfinished Business (Education of A Boy Child)*, 3 Mercer Street, NYC December 3-4, 1976

PHOTOGRAPHER: ROBERT WICKENDEN

Bracken Hendricks

I WAS BORN ON FEBRUARY 9TH, 1967, THE DAY CHARLOTTE MOOREMAN was arrested for indecent exposure during her performance of "Topless Cello." My parents sent off announcements declaring the performance—my arrival, my life—as a happening and dubbed my birth the "New Boy Event."

New York in the late 1960s and 70s was a highly charged environment, and the eyes of a child were a magical vantage from which to watch the unfolding. I have memories of many gatherings that questioned the lines separating art, community and political action. Artwork confronting the horrors of war, artist picket lines outside museums, actions, events, happenings, the creation of environments all blurred distinctions between art and life and created fertile space for invention and exploration in the interstitial spaces of culture. This time and this work showed the commonalities running through many forms of communication, introspection and integrity of action. It was a distinct historical moment. The quality of light in these memories is somehow brighter and infused with a palpable sense of possibility, challenge and self-invention.

Often I was one of only a small group of children set loose in powerful adult environments, afforded the luxury of exploring mysterious and beautiful spaces. We had the freedom to move easily between the focused circle of performance and our own fanciful games at the periphery. Exploring sites prior to performance was especially exciting, the Avant Garde Festival and other such gatherings brought us to Shea Stadium and Grand Central Station, Ocean

Liners and Armories. As children, we explored boarded up piers, abandoned schoolrooms and the ruins of castles, great sacred empty spaces filled with decay and potential. Always, we comprehended the importance and power of the work at hand, and took great pleasure in our child's play within the context of the whimsical dedication of these artists.

There was seriousness to the way that work went on in George Maciunas' basement apartment that had the intensity and dedication of a child at play. Fanciful endeavors like planning a labyrinth to fill an art museum, or organizing a sled race where everyone converged on the same point and crashed, became work and occasions for the exercise of a craftsman's dedication. Humor and intensity lived side by side with equal weight, in George's sharp and sudden laugh, and in the precision of his absurdities. When he was beaten nearly to death by mobsters, he took great relish in transforming his home into a bunker and installing a doorbell that triggered mocking laughter instead of just letting you inside. The desperately serious was not simply juxtaposed with irony, rather, they were inseparably linked, indistinguishable aspects of the same full experience.

One of the most exciting parts of being a child around the evolution of Fluxus was the acceptance of things that are downplayed, ignored or rejected in the culture at large. This theme runs throughout Fluxus: in Alison Knowles' work with beans and the soles of shoes, in Yoshi Wada's music made by orbital sanders, in my own father's cataloging of empty skies, found photographs and dreams. But it is perhaps best exemplified by George's shit collection. As a child, I devotedly saved for him the scat of all my pets; grasshoppers, mice, cats and whatever else I happened to be raising. He carefully documented and archived these fumets in glass jars and filed them away in special cabinets. The absurdity of collecting and cataloging this waste was magnificent. It was an unusual gift for a child to have adult role models for living with a profound respect for subtleties, a wry appreciation of the irony of life and the constant encouragement for questioning. As children of Fluxus, a primary experience was growing up with relics and clutter, living in the midst of an undifferentiated continuum of the sacred, the mundane, the beautiful and random objects imbued with meaning and value. Art in its native habitat is different from art in the abstracted context of galleries or museums or when seen in historical perspective. While it is being created, an artwork sits on a cluttered table with paintbrushes and glue, as unopened mail, dirty dishes and the flotsam of daily living move into and out of the creative space. Here too, life and art richly co-mingled in Fluxus. Al Hansen's collages of cigarette butts and candy wrappers, my mother Bici Hendricks' (Nye Farrabas') performances picking up garbage and thawing blocks of ice, or Jackson Mac Low's layering of multiple texts all celebrate this ambiguous overlay of context and content and seemed to welcome the blending of profession and family, art

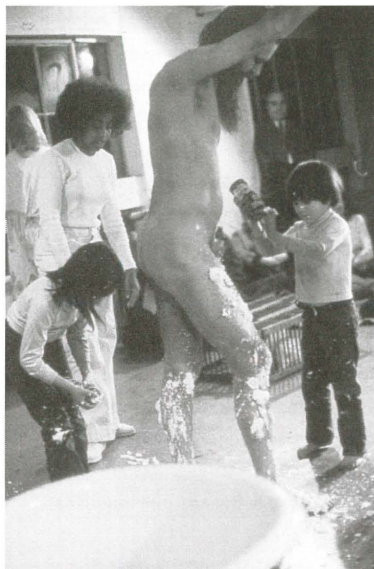


FIGURE 5 Tyche and Bracken Hendricks painting cloud forms on Geoffrey Hendricks for his *Attic Clouds*, Summit Art Center, New Jersey, February 1973,

PHOTO: ARCHIVE GEOFFREY HENDRICKS.



FIGURE 6 Geoffrey Hendricks performs *Ring Piece* (1971) A meditation on the end of his marriage, the ring is buried in the earth beneath him. Shown here at the 8th Annual New York Festival of the Avant-Garde at the 69th Regiment Armory, New York in November, 1971

PHOTOGRAPHER: VALERIE HEROUVIS. PRINTED COURTESY OF THE GEOFFREY HENDRICKS ARCHIVE

and life. Fluxus more than many forms celebrates this vital and illusive time in the artistic process while the ideas themselves are forming: where the art is embedded in its environment, where family, audience, object, artist and document are all engaged in a dialogue. Where the ultimate form of the work is itself open to question and the ultimate meaning and value still sits in a place of ambiguity. This is the realm that we as children of Fluxus had the privilege of sharing.

One of the real and lasting achievements of Fluxus has been to call attention back upstream in the creative process: through irreverence, through mass production and the destruction of commodity value, through de-emphasizing the material and posing concepts and questions and koans, through examination of scraps and relics or through the use of text. There is a constant reminder of the thought behind the action behind the object, and it is at this level that the artist is most deeply embedded in the community. It is here that ideas pollinate and cross-fertilize, and where conversations over dinner are as vital a contribution as the final art work, and more precious for their ephemerality. This was the living tradition of Fluxus that gave rise to the formal objects.

Hannah Higgins has said that Fluxus artists are realists. I am inclined to agree. This art is concrete, workmanlike, humble and intent on cutting to some constantly shifting but deeply felt notion of truth rooted in experience. Throughout this tremendously varied body of work and these radically different lives and careers, there is a common sensibility which reiterates the importance of subtleties revealed in the trivial, the extremely serious urgency of play, revulsion at the constraints of unexamined conformity and a relentless sense of immediacy. I recall a performance by Phil Corner within a larger event at Rosanna Chiesi's villa in Cavriago, Italy. In the midst of art making and chaos everywhere Phil had found an obscure corner of the space, and was quietly taping and scraping found metal objects, pressing his own ear to the rusted pipes not focusing on the people around him. It occurred to me then that this was real music—exploring the sonic qualities of the world—the latent musical potential of trash. Rather than demonstrating his own ability to perform, he was refining his own ability to listen. In so doing, he sympathetically elicited the listening of others. Through simplifying, distilling and offering stillness he provided an opening for the perception of a preexisting beauty. It was an egoless creative process, but not a trivial one. This to me captures the most beautiful aspects of Fluxus, it was profound but not virtuosic and it was not exclusive. It was welcoming. And we who were around it circulating through it, being touched by and touching it, were a part of it.

As kids we were often included in the explicit art making as well. Jessica Higgins, my sister and I collaborated with our parents on a performance based

on a child's board game that we had found at a flea market in Naples. Called the Musical Wisdom Clock, this performance/game used aliatoric processes to guide an unfolding of dance, text and movement on a large, scaffolding at the P.S. 1 performance space. In "The Education of a Boy Child" my father, his lover Brian Buczak, myself and another man, filled a gallery with branches and rough natural objects, creating an environment and making objects in a quiet conversation about how to collaborate, how to share knowledge and how to create. With George Maciunas and Ray Johnson I cut off my father's beard, to help him complete his unfinished business begun as my parents divorced, of shaving all the hair off of his body.

I recall one morning at my father's loft, stepping on ink pads and walking the length of a long roll of paper, his footprints large and spaced far apart, my smaller feet marking out a tighter line of tracks. This piece was a variant on Paik's score, "Zen for Head" where the artist dips his own hair in calligraphic ink and makes brush paintings on the floor and was a further reference to our family's earlier participation in Yoko Ono's film of bottoms. My parents and my sister as a toddler had each walked the length of a room while Yoko filmed in slow motion, the undulating pattern of dark and light lines made by the movements of their legs and bottom.

As children, we shared in the Flux Mass, the Flux Wedding, the Flux Divorce, Flux Feasts and as adults we have shared in far too many Flux Funerals. These formal flux events blend in memory with the simpler rituals of family like the joint birthday parties which I shared each February with Clarinda Mac Low. Through all of these collaborations and relationships we were being educated, building connections, learning about creativity. Like the shoe maker's child who learns to stitch and chat and the value of work all simultaneously, there was something quite ancient and organic and casual and complex about being underfoot in performance and about the way we were incorporated into the process both out of necessity and desire.

At one Avant Garde Festival, Alison Knowles passed out found objects that she had signed and labeled. I received from her a tiny broken buckle. It was a frame for placing on the table. Whatever was seen inside the frame was to be the artwork. To me the lessons of growing up inside the circle of Fluxus artists have been foremost about creating a context for clearer perception. Creating the framework for realizing beauty or creative potential is far more important than any single object of contemplation. By continually bringing attention to the simplicity of this task, Fluxus offered a real and lasting gift to the people who participated in its games and amusements. As children of Fluxus, we shared in the context for creating that context. This beginning profoundly shaped my fundamental notions of reality, beauty, work and significance, and it gave me a method for taking the task of perception seriously. It also formed my extended family.



FIGURE 7 Tyche Hendricks, Jessie and Hannah Higgins on Geoffrey Hendricks Sky Bus (1968), Summer 1969,

PHOTOGRAPHER: GEOFFREY HENDRICKS.

Tyche Hendricks

FLUXUS OUTINGS WERE WONDROUS OUTINGS FOR US KIDS. ONE TIME WE accompanied my mother to the Jefferson Market Library where she delivered a bunch of daffodils to a librarian (a piece she'd do each year on the first day of spring). Another time we visited George Maciunas's basement flat on Wooster Street to marvel at his multi-species shit collection. Another time, we attended the grommet art show at Jean Dupuy's Broadway loft, where every object or performance existed behind a sheet of canvas and could only be observed through a tiny peep hole. It was as if these events were designed for the benefit of children: full of silly things, gross things, surprising things.

There was fun with food, too. For the annual celebration of Beethoven's birthday, my father always baked a sky-frosted cake. And there was George Maciunas and Billy Hutching's Flux Wedding, to which all the guests brought erotic food. I remember a glass bowl filled with strawberries and red wax lips, and a bare-breasted mermaid with a fish tail, a body molded out of rice and seaweed hair. I'm sure there was plenty of chocolate. If I recall correctly, my aunt Joanne Hendricks made chicken soup.

And there were festivals. Avant Garde festivals, at which Fluxus artists and their ilk took over some New York City monument and filled it with silly, gross, surprising and often beautifully poetic images.

A couple of weeks before the festival opened, we would begin making excursions to the site: Shea Stadium, Grand Central Terminal, Ward's Island, the 69th Regiment Armory or the South Street Seaport. It was like being backstage at the circus, but the circus of everyday life. I knew there was magic



FIGURE 8 Tyche Hendricks performs with Geoffrey Hendricks, *Seeding* (1975). Shown here at The 12th Annual Festival of the Avant-Garde, Floyd Bennett Field, NY, 1975

PHOTOGRAPHER: GEOFFREY HENDRICKS. PRINTED COURTESY OF THE GEOFFREY HENDRICKS ARCHIVE

being made, but it was constructed out of ordinary things. For me, part of the magic was in exploring these cavernous, sometimes derelict, spaces. And part of it was in participating in events: helping my father plant seeds in the cracks in the asphalt at an old air strip, or selling imaginary fares from the ticket window of a ferry boat.

Once the show began, our parents were busy doing their thing and we kids (perhaps with a babysitter following in the distance, though I don't remember being supervised much) had free run of the place...wandering around, watching performances, sticking our fingers into Ayo's finger boxes (not knowing if we'd find marbles or jello or scratchy wool inside). But we'd always swing back around to where our parents were stationed: waving a greeting to Dad, say, as he sat crosslegged in a tuxedo on a pile of dirt, buried inside of which was a box containing his wedding ring (a meditation, I was only dimly aware, on my parents' dissolving marriage)

Those performances and festivals were social occasions too. Because Fluxus artists were among our parents' best friends, their children became our

best friends. Indeed, we spent so much time with Hannah and Jessie Higgins, and Mordecai and Clarinda Mac Low, that they came to feel like cousins to my brother, Bracken, and me. And unlike most of our real cousins, they shared and understood our wacky upbringing.

Now that a few art historians and museum shows have given Fluxus some legitimacy, a handful of the cultural cognoscenti have heard of it, but when we were kids, it was all but impossible to explain the things our parents did. "It's neo-dadaist," I could say, but who knew what dada was? Or "it's anti-art," but if that were so, were my parents really artists?

Looking around at all the folks I think of as Fluxus artists, I realize how diverse their work is: from my father, Geoff Hendricks's sky paintings, to my mother, Bici Forbes's word game sets, to Jackson Mac Low's poems, to Alison Knowles's silk screens, to Joe Jones's solar-powered guitars, to Nam June Paik's video installations, to Hermann Nitsch's animal slaughter pieces. Perhaps they were tied together by their common participation in these outlandish performance events. Or perhaps they were linked by the wacky, intuitive, free-associating sensibility that each took from those group projects into their own individual work.

My childhood was one in which art permeated everyday life: the night of my brother's birth has always been remembered by my parents as the night Charlotte Moorman was arrested for playing the cello topless; our family car, an old, gray Volkswagen bus, was transformed into the Sky Bus after my father painted it with clouds; and one weekend, on visiting my father and his partner Brian Buczak in New York (after we'd moved to Massachusetts with my mother) we kids were issued red cotton webbing belts like theirs, and inducted into the Red Belt Club, a group which appeared to have no other purpose than the wearing of the belts, and which seemingly consisted of only the four of us.

Everyday life permeated art, too, with themes of work and domesticity; my mother's performance at Ward's Island consisted of picking up trash all day; my father scythed grass there; my mother once hung out the laundry at our farm up in Nova Scotia so as to form a rainbow spectrum, then filmed the clothes billowing in the wind; my father hung pillowcases on a clothesline, then painted them blue with clouds.

The wide-opened, anything-goes attitude of Fluxus was very encouraging of our childhood creativity, and our artistic endeavors were taken seriously. I remember playing tunes on the recorder as a 10-year-old while Jessie Higgins danced, in a Musical Wisdom Clock piece our parents devised out at P.S. 1 in Queens.

We didn't really learn artistic discipline as children do who are required to practice the piano every day. But we learned to trust our intuition, to appreciate the fun and the funny, to see the world through non-conformist, outsider's eyes and to live life with a sense of possibility.



FIGURE 9 Alison Knowles performing her *String Piece* with French Fluxus artist, Ben Vautier, 1964. She is six months pregnant with twin girls.

PHOTOGRAPHER: GEORGE MACIUNAS. PRINTED COURTESY OF THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION, DETROIT

Hannah Higgins

DICK HIGGINS: DANGER MUSIC NUMBER SEVENTEEN (may 1962)

Event score: Scream! Scream! Scream! Scream! Scream! Scream!

¹ These memory texts were the original inspiration behind inviting Fluxus children to write about their experiences. Excerpts have been published in *The New Art Examiner* (March, 1994) and in "Notes Toward Indigo Island: A Conversation between Alison Knowles and Hannah Higgins" in *Alison Knowles: Indigo Island*, Catalogue, Stadt Galerie Saarbrücken: Saarbrücken, Germany, 1994.

MY FATHER IS SITTING IN THE LIVING ROOM OF OUR BROWNSTONE IN Chelsea. My twin sister, Jessica Higgins, and I are just outside the big room beside the stairs in 1968 or 1969. At the far end of the room are glass doors that lead into a small garden. In the far right corner stands a huge shade tree, which is spotlighted by three upstairs windows. There is a group of office and kitchen chairs on each side of a navy-blue industrial couch, whose back faces us. People eat, drink, read and perform for each other. Out go the lights, but the light from outdoors lets us see what's going on. Pa prepares to read, switching on the small, parchment lamp that casts a warm ochre tone over the room.

Instead, he screams. The screams have no words, yet we know he can speak. And because there are no words, there is no way to tell him to stop. This is a performance, isn't it? But it doesn't end. Maybe he's in pain, but where? Everything has disappeared from the room—everything but his face, scream-

ing at the end of a black tunnel. The sound weakens as he exhausts himself, giving way to intermittent hisses, squeaks and occasional rusty screams. The room returns to my field of vision, brighter than before.

The new silence is absolute, pure and free of desire, the overwhelming desire for peace being met. So no one disturbs it. The scream hangs in the air, pulling at the silence, threatening to unravel its soft, muffling fabric. Just before and after an earthquake there is this kind of silence. The animals, like the people in that room, wait and wonder when the peace will be disturbed again. No one describes it. No one reacts to it. Albeit welcome, it too has no words, like the scream. There is a soft breeze in the shade tree, its rustle rips through the room. I have seen the piece many times since then, the sublime emotion returns me to that living room, every time.

ALISON KNOWLES: THE BEAN ROLLS (1963)

THE BEAN ROLLS SAT IN A SMALL, SQUAT AND SQUARE CANISTER ON THE shelf in my mother's studio. To the left of them was a magnet piece with rings and cylinders by the sculptor Alice Hutchins. The shelves there were littered with carefully selected and placed found objects like flattened spoons, squashed shoe parts and a few small size art editions. With a beige label, a small size and pop-up lid like a can of Quick chocolate milk, the can was extremely appealing to hold. One day I took the can off the shelf, flipped the lid and began to finger the few beans inside. There were also a handful of small scrolls printed with tiny letters: "Never let a dog guard the bean paste. Proverb from Japan" said one. All of the scrolls had bean information on them so I read them and left them on the floor, rustling in paper snakes at my feet. Stepping carefully, I gathered them up, re-rolled them and returned them to the can. It strikes me now that the Bean Rolls (the first such artists' book on record) implied the possibility of a non-linear and potentially never ending codex. My mother has described that after filling about 200 cans with her mother, Lois Knowles, she donated the remaining scrolls to the street, where they blew away, "rolling in the wind like leaves."

JOE JONES: MECHANICAL ORCHESTRA

Self-playing, motor-operated reeds, whistles, horns, violins, bells and gongs play predetermined, dynamically variable and continuous tones for a determined length of time.

MY FATHER, MOTHER, SISTER AND I HAVE BEEN DRIVING ALL DAY, OR SO it seems, from New York City to Jean Brown's place in Tyringham, Massachusetts for lunch on our way to Vermont. It is about 1976. She lives in a beautiful gray Shaker seed house with trim. The clean, boxy house is full of very sober Shaker furniture. Pilgrims must have lived there once. On a long very narrow table in a tiny white room there is a simple buffet. I go up the very narrow stairs and into a small bright room, which I have since learned is the

archive. The sights and sounds of a late spring; the leaves, wet branches and leisure cars, filter through the small, warped windows. Solitude.

I can hardly see over the large oak and metal cabinets, but there is a lot of Fluxus stuff around. Something looks like an A-yo Fingerbox, which is a briefcase-size box full of fist-size holes in them that prick or squish or hug one's fingers. Some clear boxes with pebbles in them, maybe they are George's shit collection, or someone's rocks, or maybe a chess set. Between a lamp and a long thin window at the far end of the room is something I haven't remembered seeing before. It is a violin hanging by thin wires in mid-air from a simple metal stand with a magnet mounted over its strings. The magnet has broken rubber bands stuck in the form of a propeller. I hold one between my fingers and brush it across the strings. It sounds brushy and mysterious, like the rustling sound just before a frightening clamor in a B-movie.

ERIC ANDERSON: OPUS #10, 233 (INVITE PEOPLE TO LEAVE A PERFORMANCE, 1985)

AN UPPER STORY OF A MUSCULAR, BRICK ADMINISTRATION BUILDING IN the medieval capital of Denmark is an unlikely site for a performance. That city, Roskilde, is about thirty miles east of Copenhagen and is the site of Eric Anderson's Festival of Fantastics. This massive reunion of Fluxus has, among others, the invitational piece mentioned above. The dark, wood-paneled room, which looks like a small court room, is oppressive with heat and air previously owned by the frustrated audience inside. The heavy wood door presses shut behind, sealing in the audience. A few people are smiling, but most simply wait on narrow, butt-cramping, high-backed benches or pews. Eric Anderson is sitting at the far end of the room behind a large, heavy table, smiling. "I would like to invite you to leave the performance," he says mischievously. Feeling a little paranoid and missing the point entirely, I look for enemies in the audience.

Protesting, I sit down and wait, joining the other uncomfortable people in the room. More victims enter and are greeted the same way. They sit down too. Beside Andersen is an enormous table full of cheese, fruit, candy, gifts, schnapps and wine. Must be for the reception, I hope this ends soon. The air is distinctly second hand and musty. Stuffy. "May I open a window?" The window stays closed and the room shrinks. The heavy wood walls are sweating as if they can't get any new air either. "Will you please leave the performance now? I can offer you anything on this table to leave." I took nothing with me, the goodies had just become another obstacle to a much-needed, rapid exit.



FIGURE 10 Jessica Higgins and David Doris serve *A Dozen for Carmen* by Ben Patterson. In this piece, a dozen roses are blended up and consumed to the opera *Carmen*. Shown here at Three Star A la Carte, The Judson Church, New York, 1992.

PHOTOGRAPHER: MANUEL RODRIGUEZ. PRINTED COURTESY OF LARRY MILLER AND SARA SEAGULL, NEW YORK

Jessica Higgins

WHEN I WAS 15 YEARS OLD I FOUND MYSELF IN A CIRCUS OF AVANT-GARDE folks performing in a festival. This one was The Flux Festival at SUNY Purchase. Behind the stage the objects piled up in corners, like people places. Wild artists would be bustling here and there with shouts of who's next and where is this or that. I remember Jean Dupey's blowing pepper into the audience, the sneezes, the getting into trouble. Me lifting my bowler hat to the "clock person." I sensed a magical chaos.

When I was sixteen years old my mother asked me to be in another one of her performances. This one was the Wall to Wall John Cage & Friends at Symphony Space. I knew this was a bigger event than the other performances I'd grown accustomed to. I threw myself into her work with abandon. I brought my training in gymnastics and dance and she gave me a window in her world to place it in. To help with my nerves we would make a series of index cards that could be placed on the floor so I'd remember the next pattern. The names were like the "child's pose," "back walkover," "spider," "jelly-bean." As a tradition in our work we'd do a short meditation before going on. This was the way she taught me to focus and connect to the universe. The day finally came. The stage seemed huge and my little body pounded. I knew it

was important to be a part of my mother's work and it gave me the chance to dance. I remember the darkness, all of the people out there I couldn't see, the slide light beginning. The images of beans and embedded objects appeared on the screen, my shadow waxing and waning, her sounds weaving their way into my dance. The time flew by. A microphone was placed in front of me, I'd answer a few questions I remember my name appeared misspelled in the *New York Times*.

As an adult in 1992 Larry Miller had the madcap idea of doing a Fluxus evening at the same time as one in Germany. This was the Fluxus A' la Carte at the Judson Church in New York City. Some children of Fluxus and friends were in it. We were all dressed as waiters handing out menus with art events ready to order. Larry Miller had yet again taken on the tremendous job of organizing the event. Yes, I did do Carmen and blended up the roses. I also got the chance to serve unidentified food. We had a grand ol' time as the performances unfolded. Seeing the influence and fun it brought everyone was a trip in time.

I heard this operatic voice, a blender, other pieces being performed and the table was whispering. Watching. My tux covered with an apron, all the black and white contrasted against this red rose. A line of us held one rose each. This may have been my version of 'Carmen.' The pungent smell of rose water and musty crushed stems waited in the air. They were all being mashed into a shake. The thorns ... something bittersweet and wacky hung in the air. I had the urge to taste this rose shake—the thought it might be good if you were dieting crossed my mind. The events going on around me faded into the distance. As I moved closer to the blender and the end, I handed it over, into the whirlpool ... the green stem twirling. Then Miller did the drinking of the potion. We were concerned about indigestion; many smiles appeared.

Clarinda and Mordecai-Mark Mac Low (a.k.a. M-M)

AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS: JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 1999

Dear Clarinda,²

So, what is Fluxus?

From my perspective, Fluxus appeared to be an attempt by Maciunas to give a brand name to a particular approach to art, one being pursued by many people at the time. That it was basically successful is attested to by this article. That it was good for his reputation was brought home to me when I was in Mannheim Kunsthalle last month. They have a large atrium with names of maybe 50 famous artists around the top—Cranach, Da Vinci, Mondrian, Heartfield—and Maciunas was up there.

Now advertising will no doubt be considered the religious art of the twentieth century, but was the act of advertising (and organizing newsletters and festivals and such) an artwork and specifically a Fluxus artwork? Insofar as Fluxus-linked artists were questioning the nature of art and the role of the artists in its creation, I guess you could argue that it was. Anything goes: In so far as Fluxus was about art in the moment and about opposing the dead hand of the academy and museums (my employers, of course), creating a brand that fixed a label on a particular moment of artistic creativity seems directly counter to the idea of Fluxus.

To a child there was a great deal of the circus in Fluxus and Fluxus-related events. You've mentioned the annual Avant-Garde Festivals that Charlotte Moorman organized during the sixties and seventies in the most amazing locations in NYC (a train in Grand Central Station, Shea Stadium, the Cruise Ship terminal, etc.) These were accessible to a child: When Geoff Hendricks filled a steamship room with leaves, or someone set up a full-size Ferris wheel with white and yellow neon in an armory, that was fun! I looked forward to those festivals far more each year than to the over-billed spangles and elephants of the Ringling Bros.

However, it wasn't clear to me that using Maciunas' Fluxus label for this broad stream of creative activity really makes that much sense. At the time, I guess I perceived Maciunas (whom I don't remember ever actually meeting) as some manic guy, who made grand pronouncements that were vaguely related to what my parents were doing. That he would be later picked as central would not have particularly crossed my mind. After all, there were plenty of maniacs running around making grand pronouncements in 1969!

love,

Mordecai³

² Clarinda Mac Low is a performance artist, choreographer and dancer, as well as a freelance medical writer, living and working in New York City.

³ Mordecai-Mark Mac Low is an astrophysicist working at the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy in Heidelberg, moving to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City in Spring, 1999.

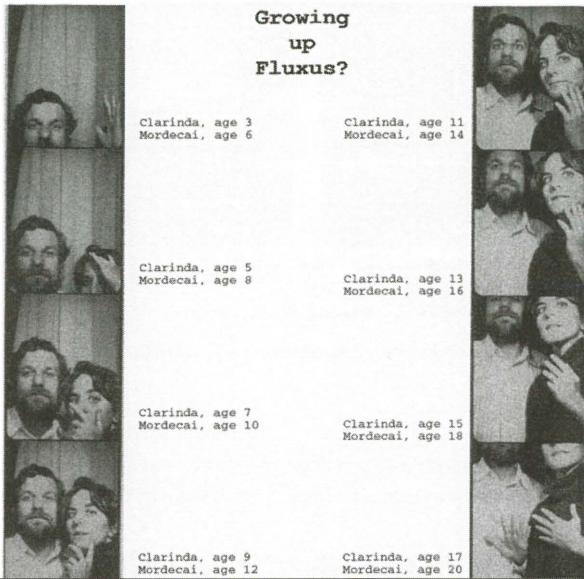
Hey M-M,

It's hard to wrap my head around the Fluxus art phenomenon, especially right now, while I am so busy trying to be an artist. I have only the vaguest idea even what that means, which is kind of embarrassing, considering I'm a "Fluxkid" and even participated in performing in a Fluxus revival several years ago in New York (*figure 3*). I remember being at Larry Miller and Sara Seagull's loft, talking about it with several people, then performing at the Anthology Film Archives building on Second Avenue...I don't remember the name of the event, but I did two old scores, I can't remember whose; beautiful, simple instructions that left room for all kinds of interpretation.

I felt the same way that I feel now. At the time of making those performances I felt, "all this is new to me"—I don't retain my theory or sense of fixed history from any of my experiences as a kid in what becomes known as the Fluxus world. I retain myriad sensory impressions and a deep love for certain people I knew. Maybe I was just a spaced-out kid, but I was much more involved in the deliciousness of the experiences or the way people looked at me, than I was involved in the historical implications of it. Later, in adolescence, I was just embarrassed because everything was weird and I felt like I wanted order, structure, tradition and security—not this fun-house life. I remember specifically one Avant-Garde Festival in the lobby of the World Trade Center. I must have been around eleven or twelve. All the stuff around just seemed silly. I didn't enjoy its fantasy and fun-ness anymore. I was embarrassed that *that* was my father out there in the courtyard making strange noises into the microphone. Of course, when I came out into the courtyard and looked at the people watching him in various states of horror, amusement, fascination and curiosity, I had a flash of pride that he would dare do such a thing in such a place (I wasn't yet so conservative that I didn't despise capitalism and its trappings, after all). It wasn't until I was in college that I suddenly did a flip in my thinking, and realized that my values had a lot more in common with what I had experienced growing up than with other traditions.

Because, yes, I feel squarely within a tradition of making art, one which I trace not just back to Dada and the early 20th century, wealthy, wacky artists that were "experimental," but back far far into the history of the European (and others; I am from the hybrid U.S. of A. after all, and influenced by the many cultures that came here to clash) performance forms. I also remember thinking during the planning of that Fluxus recreation (see above) that if these scores for performances are Fluxus, then, in fact, there's a lot I do retain, as an artist, from Fluxus—a sense of the importance of play in performance, a desire to interact directly with an audience, a desire to find simple innovative ways of communicating...I was interested to find evidence of all of these.

Grand pronouncements, categories, advertising...Gee, I dunno. I'm trying to go on what resonated for me as a child during those times, and its sub-

FIGURE 11 Clarinda and Mordecai Mac Low *Growing Up Fluxus?*, 1998

PRINTED COURTESY OF CLARINDA AND MORDECAI MAC LOW

sequent impact on my life, and what's impacted me are the pieces I saw and the people I interacted with. This is not to say that I haven't gained some odd currency in the NY "downtown" theater world by being "second-generation avant-garde." That has certainly influenced my trajectory somehow and probably mostly as an advantage. However, I feel woefully lacking in a historical perspective on my own life.

During Dick Higgins' memorial in NYC recently a lot of us "Fluxkids" met for dinner afterwards. I was moved not so much by what was defined about our experience, but by our experience of sharing something undefinable. And maybe that's what Fluxus was purporting to be, and maybe, with all the documentation and cataloguing and pronouncements and everything it is still that. Which is, for me at least, both traumatic and a source of tremendous internal freedom (or perhaps traumatic because a source of freedom?).

Dear Clarinda,

I agree with much of your feeling for what Fluxus was for a kid, but that also says something about how peripheral Fluxus was to Jackson's work. I certainly feel that I have a reasonable theoretical grasp of what he was trying to do in his poetic work, but its association with Fluxus seemed rather peripheral



FIGURE 12 Jackson Mac Low and Anne Tardos performing their *Four Language Word Event in Memoriam John Cage*. Shown here at Flux Concert, Anthology Film Archives, New York, 1992

PHOTOGRAPHER: ANNIE WANN. PRINTED COURTESY OF LARRY MILLER AND SARA SEAGULL, NEW YORK

FIGURE 13 Clarinda Mac Low performing a *Suite of Fluxus Works*. Shown here at Flux Concert: Anthology Film Archives, New York, 1992

(and I don't think I'm revealing any deep, dark family secrets), if I note that he often claims not to be a Fluxus artist/poet, even though he clearly did participate in Fluxus.

OK, perhaps I'm getting too hung up on the label. Truth to tell, I am also puzzled about how particular ideas get credited to particular people in my field of astronomy. As often as not, multiple people are fumbling around with the same ideas, and it seems the one who gets credit often isn't the one who publishes first, but the one who goes around to the most conferences talking about it the loudest. I guess that's maybe as reasonable a description of Maciunas's success as any.

It's interesting—in some way I went through the inverse of the evolution you described. In my teenage years I continued performing with Jackson as both of us had done as kids without the embarrassment you felt during that period, but then never went through the second transition that you did at Wesleyan, where it became clear to you that you had your own artistic work to do. I think it was clear to both of us from the experience of our parents that having a means to earn one's living was important, and to both of us it seemed obvious that scientific training would give that, possibly because that was Jackson's perception as well. However, that turned out to be my primary creative work, while despite your success in molecular biology, dance and performance grabbed you. I'm the older sibling, so I went for the stability?

Certainly growing up in that environment has affected my science, but mostly in pretty indirect ways. For example, giving talks came pretty naturally to me, as I had been performing since about the age of three: the nice thing about the sort of performance art that was being done is that there was space for us kids to play too, whether in Jackson's simultaneities or Meredith Monk's epic dances or whatever other things we did. Certainly, I had Jackson's example in front of me as a careful writer who tried to write expository prose

as clearly as possible. But clearly these are somewhat peripheral to the core of trying to make sense of the bits and pieces of observations and theories about the births and deaths of stars and how they fit into the galactic ecology.

Was there something special about growing up in that artistic scene? On the one hand, yes, of course. On the other hand I guess I wonder if any group of children who grew up together wouldn't be likely to feel that they shared something special, even if it was just the pond on the other side of the tracks or the subways of NYC.

Love,
Mordecai

Hey-

Yes, I know there's that thing of oh, well everyone feels special, but I do feel like what we kids shared has a certain kind of uniqueness in that it's not part of a mass culture's view of experience. Let's face it, there aren't a whole lot of movies about kids growing up in the avant-garde art world—there's no tv-movie-of-the-week about those serious and dedicated performance artists. The closest we get is Darryl Hannah in "Legal Eagles," as a self-indulgent pyromaniac, or laughing at embarrassingly bad LA performance art in "She's All That." (I know, pop culture illiterate that you are, even worse than I, you probably haven't heard of either of those movies and it's not just 'cause you're in Germany, which proves my point even more).

Anyway, that's dangerous ground that I'm treading, and I'm not trying to say we're so special, just that being part of a sub-culture that created culture, and yet was so far out of a larger culture, yet engaged in examining/opposing that culture and participating in or benefiting from it (trust funds and such) is a very particular space. This always becomes clear to me when I meet other people (besides our particular childhood friends) who have similar backgrounds. Admittedly, there are very few, but we've tended to fall in love, in one way or another, partly because of the relief of not having to explain is so intense. Perhaps that's been my experience; I do a lot of explaining and I am an exotic in some way. Telling people about my past is often like having a certain kind of rare ethnicity and explaining the customs and traditions of my tribe to a curious, but slightly mystified, anthropologist.

So much for my fluxus archaeology. Meanwhile, people just keep making and making, informed by history, in spite of history, with or without categories or identities. In my up moments, this is entirely inspiring.

luv cml



FIGURE 14 Rebecca Moore with Jeff Buckley perform *Choice 1* by Robert Bozzi (1966). Shown here at Flux Concert, Anthology Film Archives, New York, 1992

PHOTOGRAPHER: ANNIE WANN. PRINTED COURTESY OF LARRY MILLER AND SARA SEAGULL, NEW YORK

Rebecca Moore

IT IS HARD TO GET SPECIFIC ABOUT MY CHILDHOOD. BECAUSE DAD'S PHOTOS hung all over the house, or were scattered on the table we once ate dinner at (but eventually became too covered by ephemera). I often am confused about what performances/art/installations I actually saw or which ones I just kind of stepped into the photographs of.

Also, I had a recurring nightmare as a child (well, one of many) about a monster in a tuxedo covered with arms and hands—only to realize later as an adult, it was one of Pat Olezsko's wearable sculpture creations from a performance at the Kitchen (I believe, when it was still in SoHo).

I think of childhood as exhausting, confusing, exciting... As a kid, how could I understand the rows of razor blades that covered every inch of George Maciunas' door? It was scary, but my parents laughed about it as they called him from the corner payphone (as they could not knock on the door, which is why he put them there). He looked menacing, especially in those glasses ... and after he lost his eye. Anyway, my mom informed us he didn't really like kids, but thought we were okay—which I ignored anyway.

My sister and I became very good at keeping ourselves busy. Sometimes we got involved in the Art. Sometimes the shows were boring to us and we would spend the hours in the back making towers of those gray foam floor cushions they had at every performance and happening. We would pile them

as high as possible and then—take a running jump from way back—and fling ourselves over/into them.

Fluxus was a world unto itself. I am grateful to have been brought up among its many sweet, exhilarating and creative people, but mostly I am grateful for the works with a sense of humor. Well guess that means the most of it. I don't know why I can often remember only the long, long, LONG silent, serious moments in the galleries and lofts, when I felt afraid to move and possibly disrupt a piece; even though I had to pee or was cold or hungry.

I am sorry to dwell on such moments here but it is honest. I have just hit thirty and am a struggling artist myself, though not a Fluxus artist—but at the same time I am simultaneously A) finally able to appreciate and notice and understand how deeply Fluxus and the other avant-garde art I was raised around has influenced me, and B) come to terms with understanding what a completely ODD and unique—and sometimes difficult—way it was to grow up. Not all of my examples are Fluxus ones. Mom and Dad went to just about everything. It has all somewhat blended together, though I do understand the differences intellectually.

There are only a few Fluxus kids around. Recently some of us gathered together one evening at Geoff Hendricks' place. It was a few days after Dick Higgins' memorial service. I hadn't seen some of them in a long time. It was amazing to talk and to finally start grasping that we were the sole heirs to witnessing the Fluxus movement in NYC as it was. I think most of us agreed that some of our favorite Fluxus events were Maciunas' big theme dinners: one of them was color. The tablecloth that covered the long table was striped in all the colors of the rainbow and George told each artist to bring food in a certain color. Then it was placed on that part of the table. My mom's color was purple so she brought a stew of purple cabbage with some purple meatballs. One artist took black and white, and brought just huge gigantic blocks of dark and white chocolate. (There were chisels and a hammer to knock bits off to eat.) Miralda did his famous rainbow whirled breads (my mom to this day has saved slices in 'ziplock' bags).

George took it upon himself to do "clear." He spent, I was told, weeks distilling beef and orange juice and fish of some kind. So the clear liquid you were drinking was O.J., and the mounds of clear jello were beef and fish. It was great.

Another one was at Halloween, at a huge place he got in New Marlborough, Massachusetts (he hoped to make an artists' hotel). The theme was apples and potatoes, because that was all they had on hand. (Later a few enterprising Japanese artists on the prowl of the estate found mushrooms so that was added to the menu.) Somehow all the artists managed to make a huge feast out of those items. The dining room still had a suit of armor and was very regal—with Maciunas' immaculately catalogued "Shit Collection" in a



FIGURE 15 Mieko Shiomi, *Disappearing Music for Face* (1964). Shown here at Fluxus A la Carte, Judson Church, New York, 1992. Left to Right: Hanako Iijima (daughter of Ay-O), Yoshi Wada, Clarinda Mac Low, Rebecca Moore, Jeff Buckley.

PHOTOGRAPHER: ANNIE WANN. PRINTED COURTESY OF LARRY MILLER AND SARA SEAGULL, NEW YORK

huge file cabinet on the other side. (Don't worry—it was dried out and didn't smell). Afterwards, in our Halloween costumes, we all went down to the local garbage dump in a caravan and sort of had a Happening, parading across the mounds of garbage in our costumes.

Apparently, George went there a lot to collect materials and found objects for his art. The Halloween weekend stands out in my memory because the children were consciously allowed to contribute as opposed to incidentally. All the artists were doing installations and performances in each room, and some of us kids wanted a room also. George said yes, and our piece was sort of that classic Halloween game, where you pass around things in the dark (wet grapes are a dead person's eyeballs; cold string, their veins, etc.)

Things stand out to me in my thoughts about Fluxus; it is not always just the art itself, but the people. Geoff Hendricks' big smile, Alison Knowles' presence, Larry Miller (the one and only), George, Dick Higgins...really cool personalities and of course my Dad clicking away at each show; my mom, the art historian on the phone trying to correct an author about to list Charlotte Moorman incorrectly as a Fluxus artist in their book. Childhood was all about the art and its people.

I remember one thing, and I'll end with this thought though it is fuzzy, because it sums up my feelings. I was very little, at some gallery or loft. The show was a series of holes drilled in the wall—some high, some low.⁴ The

⁴ The holes were actually grommets sewn into cloth. The event was Jean Dupuy's Grommet Theatre in what is now the Emily Harvey Gallery.

audience had to look through the holes. Through each we saw something different by a different artist.

One hole involved climbing up a ladder to look through...inside you saw train tracks. A little train came around on the tracks pulling one car that had a giant milkshake. When it got to the hole the train stopped and a hand pushed a straw through the hole. Another hole I looked through was very different. I looked through and saw a naked young girl crying. (Was it you Jessica? Forgive me for bringing this up if it was.) She was taking part in an enactment of that famous painting by Sandro Botticelli of Venus standing in the shell. She seemed cold and clearly didn't want to do it, standing still in that position as her braided hair got tied up with strings and filled with found objects to look frozen in the wind.⁵ There were fans on her. An adult male artist moved around her completing the set-up while she cried without stopping.

⁵ She was dressed in a single, floorlength yarn braid. The artist was Alison Knowles.

It was not until recently that I fully understood that as kids our needs often came second, after art. She seemed cold and clearly didn't want to do it, standing still in that position as her hair got tied up with strings to look frozen on the wind. There were fans on her. An adult male artist moved around her completing the set-up while she cried without stopping.

So my vote stands: milkshakes, YES; Sad girl, NO.

Author Note

HANNAH HIGGINS IS ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ART HISTORY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF Illinois in Chicago. Her focus has been intermedia and the avant-garde. In 2002, University of California Press published *Fluxus Experience*, a philosophical inquiry into the social and pedagogical traditions of Fluxus. Higgins has organized exhibitions on the work of several Fluxus artists. The daughter of Fluxus co-founders Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles, Higgins is herself one of the "Fluxkids" who continue the Fluxus legacy in different ways.