

The Impossible Performance of Mass Commodity. George Maciunas, Herman Fine and Robert Watts' Implosions Inc. (ca. 1967)

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ABSTRACT: In the US context Fluxus is understood as an advance of the '60s radicalism. The assumption that Fluxus was opposed to consumption culture, as that embodied by Pop art, is among the interpretations that renew such a view. Examining the example of Implosions Inc., a short-lived but nevertheless interesting commercial enterprise formed by Robert Watts, Herman Fine and George Maciunas in 1967, this essay focuses its attention on the complex relationship between Fluxus and commercial culture. Implosions Inc. was a project in which many Pop artists were asked to participate along with its Fluxus founders, and it was intended as another step forward in the transformation of the artist into a commodity mass-producer. In analyzing this phenomenon, this article questions assumed principles in the Neo-avantgarde theory like the distinction between art production and culture consumption. The essay, however, will try to establish another paradigm that draws the differences between Pop art and Fluxus as the kind of audiences both these tendencies tried to conform. As a conclusion, the article fleshes out some ideas on individualism that were developed by Maciunas, which shed light on the notions surrounding the idea of collectivism as developed in Fluxus.

KEYWORDS: Fluxus; Pop art; George Maciunas; commercial culture; consumerism and productivism.

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RESUMEN: *La imposible performance de la mercancía de masas. George Maciunas, Herman Fine y Robert Watts en Implosions Inc. (Ca. 1967).*.- En el contexto de los EE.UU., Fluxus ha sido entendido como avanzada del radicalismo de la década de los 60. La asunción de que Fluxus se oponía a la cultura comercial, tal y como era representada por el pop art, es una de las líneas que renueva dicha interpretación. Mediante el análisis de Implosions Inc., una pequeña pero fundamental empresa de Fluxus que formaron en 1967 George Maciunas, Robert Watts y Herman Fine, este ensayo pretende mostrar colaboraciones entre los artistas Fluxus y Pop y que se propuso hacer del artista un productor de mercancía de masas. Al analizar este episodio, el artículo cuestiona principios de la teoría de la neovanguardia, como la distinción entre el arte de la producción y la cultura del consumo. Del mismo modo, se propone otro paradigma para establecer las diferencias entre el Pop Fluxus como el tipo de público que pretendían formar. Como conclusión el artículo resalta algunas ideas sobre el individualismo que fueron desarrolladas por Maciunas que iluminan la idea de colectivismo que se desarrolló en Fluxus.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Fluxus; pop art; George Maciunas; cultura comercial; consumismo y productivismo.

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The idea that Fluxus represents the radical and political ethos of the '60s is deeply rooted in the US art historical discourse. Born between the unpolitical '50s and the over-politicized '60s, one of the earliest references to Fluxus radicalism can be traced back to 1979, when Harry Ruhé published *Fluxus: the Most Radical and Experimental Movement of the '60s*. Although it was published in Amsterdam, the book introduced to the English speaking community the work of many Fluxus related artists. Ruhé's book was composed of chapters that attended each artist individually with a short biography and a sample of his or her work. The edition resulted in a binder that allowed adding future artists, a procedure which while heralded the idea that Fluxus was not over after 1978, was never accomplished. The influence of this edition in the US bibliography on Fluxus has not been yet recognized although it is quite important: its concentration on chapters dedicated to each artist and their work was later followed by many essential editions, such as the three volumes compiled under the title *Fluxus Etc.* (Hendricks (ed.), 1981, 1983a and 1983b) and the also well known *Fluxus Codex* (Hendricks, 1988). All four volumes compose the essential bibliographical references to the subject.

Some other references have argued about the radical transformations undertaken by Fluxus, like Andreas Huyssen¹ for whom this group of artists, and not traditional countercultural movements, embodies the relationship of the Neo-avantgarde to the political context that leads to the revolutionary 1968. In this same line of thinking, Benjamin Buchloh has given the best account of Fluxus resisting attitude in its rejection of the object as commodity. Fluxus, for him, goes against the grain of an ever-expanding universe of commodities as that of the '60s:

The object is in a state of total control in its commodity status. The object as commodity can no longer be the point of departure for artistic intervention. What the Fluxus artists introduce is the level and dimension of performativity as viewer-spectator participation thereby resuscitating the object as commodity from its fetish status and reliberating the object as a historically atrophied model of the Duchampian ready-made and bringing it back into a completely new circuit, into a completely new discourse, into a completely different type of viewer-author discourse (Buchloh, 2001: 87).

Julia Robinson's *Maciunas as producer* (2008) pushes even forward Buchloh's set of associations. Her assumption of the Fluxus leader, George Maciunas, as an artist of production clearly aims to establish a difference with Pop art, famously tagged as an 'art of consumption' by Jean Baudrillard already in 1970. If read literally, her essay delivers a view on Fluxus as fully concerned with productivism and, as assumed, against commercialism and consumption which was only implied in previous analysis. The bottom line of this distinction is to assert that Fluxus (along with some other movements) incarnates the liberating impulse of art during the '60s whereas Pop represents its oppression. It is quite clear that such a distinction echoes traditional debates on critical theory since the Adornian dialectic between the music of Schönberg and Stravinski.

As this essay will show, rejecting commercialism as a whole in favor of productivism was not the concern for many Fluxus artists, therefore it is not the line of distinction between Pop art and Fluxus. Quite the contrary: as Tomas Kellein (2002) already suggested, addressing the practice of consumption and commercialism was unavoidable for these artists. Their negotiations with both concepts are clear in the example analyzed in this essay: Implosions Inc. This commercially driven company involved George Maciunas, Robert Watts and Herman Fine in 1967 and through it they tried to establish close collaborations with some Pop artists. This Fluxus project complicates the relationship of this movement with Pop art and consumption in a more dialectical way than mere opposition. Nevertheless, Maciunas is said to have replied to the proposal to assemble a box on Warhol: 'Never! Never! That thief! Warhol already stole all of my ideas!' (Williams, 2006: 106). This essay tries not only to reevaluate the relationship between Pop art and Fluxus, in doing so it also reconsiders essential issues in cultural analysis such as the role of consumption in contemporary culture, the ways of dealing with art-making in an environment where industrial production had pervaded every aspect of social life itself—to the extreme of transforming subjectivity in another field of production—and the ways artists deal with cultural resistance.

The relationship between Fluxus and productivism is however well known. Fluxus self-assumed leader, George Maciunas, acknowledged that one of the most important influences of Fluxus was LEF, Left Front of Arts (Maciunas, 2002: 163), the post-revolutionary Soviet movement under which the very concept of 'productivism' first emerged. LEF's influence was in fact essential for Maciunas: Fluxus members should do as their LEF predecessors which, in Maciunas's eyes, meant quitting their job as artists and earn a living out of a useful 8-hour-a-day profession (Medina, 2003: 56). This peculiar view of LEF artists is quite unique and shows that it is not clear what exactly Maciunas associated with LEF itself. As C. Medina (2003: 217 and 2006: 235-7) has brilliantly pointed out, his knowledge of LEF came from very different sources: his readings of Alfred Barr's essays, probably Camilla Gray's *The Great Experiment in Russian Art* (1962) and some other sources less canonical (like his conversations by mail with Henry Flynt). It is quite doubtful that Maciunas managed to get a very clear idea on LEF only from these resources. Even more obscuring is the fact that when Maciunas sought for copies of LEF's magazine in the early '60s, he occasionally defined Fluxus as 'Folk art,' which in that context seemed an implied adjective for LEF itself.² The fact that he was looking for this magazine in his natal Lithuania—requesting them to the later-to-be president of the Lithuanian Republic Vytautas Landsbergis—reveals that he was not even aware that LEF was censored in the USSR at the time.

LEF's legacy today is still controversial. For example, Christina Kaier (2010) has argued that LEF's artists designed objects that fully embodied commodity: dresses and even advertisements which, although intended to ease the transition to a fully socially state, do not represent the avant-gardist productivist aesthetic at all. Which concep-

tion of LEF was Maciunas associating himself with: the avant-gardist notion based on factory-production, or the one involved in dresses, ads and other commodity forms?

Fluxus consumption is vividly represented in the case of Implosions Inc., a project that evaporates many of the assumptions that traditionally have drawn the cartography of Fluxus and Pop art.

IMPLOSIONS

In early 1967, Implosions Inc. was founded by Robert Watts and Herman Fine. Maciunas joined very soon afterwards. For almost two years this company was so important that Fluxus took second position, becoming a 'subsidiary' of Implosions itself, as Maciunas would put it. Implosions Inc. belongs to a late phase of Fluxus when, using Stewart Home's terms (1991: 50-55), the 'heroism' of its first propositions were already forgotten. Since 1961, when Maciunas first got involved in the New York avant-garde, he had been able to organize Fluxus events in his AG Gallery and later on, after moving to the US Army base in Wiesbaden, West Germany, he finally arranged several concerts to be held at different cities around west and east Europe to which many international artists were invited. Maciunas not only organized these concerts, he also managed to get the attention of a great deal of experimental artists and composers working worldwide—even from countries behind the Iron Wall. During this period his contact list grew as never before conforming an artist network out of which Fluxus emerged. But if in the winter of 1962 the Fluxus network was expanding as no other movement had ever done in the '60s, the dream of a Fluxus collective rapidly disappear. Soon after coming back to the US, Maciunas felt that the artists were not willing to take part in a fixed collective which led him to fear the disintegration of the group. Since then, Fluxus took on a different chapter: although Maciunas never abandoned his ideals, his friends were able to transform the Fluxus-as-collective ethos into a relationship of friends that simply collaborated every once in a while. It is in this second chapter of Fluxus where Implosions Inc. fits in. Even if it steps out of the traditional period of scholarly attention to Fluxus, it nevertheless expands many ideas and projects that originated in the early '60s as shown in the following pages.

In the Fluxus newsletter of March, 1967, Maciunas announced: 'A triple partnership was formed between Bob Watts, Herman Fine and myself to introduce into mass market some potentially money producing products (of practical nature) (mostly)' (Maciunas, 1983: 174). Watts' hand written notes reveal that some other names were considered (Pataphysics, General Motos, 66 Inc., Ideomat, Yam Inc.). Some products that became essential for Implosions Inc. were first produced under the Fluxus signature: T-shirts with slogans and printed images, masculine and feminine underwear, printed aprons and several different versions of the cheap furniture can be found one or two years before Implosions was created.

Implosions Inc., with much less personnel than Fluxus and more hierarchical in its organization, expanded some

of the most important principles of the Fluxus ethos: mass production of cheap objects to be bought by the widest possible public. An internal company document directly acknowledged that these principles aimed at transforming art production into a success in consumption:

The concept, however, of the artist creating for mass audience has been ignored. Since many of our most creative artists are now willing to create specifically for mass consumption, the Company considers the potential commercial exploitation of this concept to be unlimited [...] The principal business of this company will be the mass production of objects and artifacts developed by leading artists and designers whose creative ideas and talents can best be directed to recent developments in mass production technique.³

This document's obvious endorsement of creativity for commercial expediency (Yúdice, 2003), one of the most blatant of the 1960s, projected the enrollment of some Pop artists already successful at the time. Among these: Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenburg, Jim Dine and other artists were also considered.⁴ It is difficult to determine whether they made further contact with these artists, but the fact that another Pop artist, Peter Max, designed one of the stick-on tattoos series for Implosions (actually, one of their most important series) [Fig. 1], suggests that



FIGURE 1. Penny's Rainbow Lane, Implosions Inc., Peter Max design, 1967. Robert Watts Paper Collection Getty Research Center. (RWGRC).

some kind of networking actually occurred. Although the documentation is lacking concerning contacts with these artists, both Watts and Lichtenstein were teachers at Rutgers University, and this fact would have made it easy to establish untraceable informal connections.

Maciunas' expectations for publicity, in this specific case commercial success, were not only peculiar to Implosions Inc. Well known is the fact that in 1963, when Maciunas came back to New York after organizing the Fluxus tour in Europe, he proposed a program of activist attacks on concert venues, museums, communication and transportation systems that would have led Fluxus to be known to everybody. These acts, termed 'pseudo-terroristic' by Maciunas himself, although quite funny, were rejected by many of the participating artists as they saw them as violent propaganda. At least in its early steps, Implosions appears to be an expansion of this propagandist project. With Implosions, however, the publicity of these activist events was transformed into recognition through acts of mass-consumption.

ROBERT WATTS: THE POLITICS OF COMMERCIAL CULTURE AT THE HEART OF LOS ANGELES IN 1963

The work of Robert Watts best exemplifies the expansion of art into the commercial venue, especially after 1963, when Watts came up with some ideas that were later adapted specifically for Implosions. Watts' relationship to Fluxus and Pop art is an ambiguous one. He has been labeled as 'invisible' (Block and Heinrich, 1999) since his absolute affiliation to either has always been problematic (especially with the latter). Many Implosions' products, such as the stamps [Fig. 2], find their first materialization in the Yam Festival Watts organized in 1963 with George Brecht and the exhibition *Scissors Brothers' Warehouse* (from now on *SBW*), held at the Rolf Nelson Gallery, in L.A. that same year. This last one show stresses more specifically the set of dilemmas and relations between Implosions, Pop and Fluxus.

The *SBW* exhibition is a part of one of the most intense moments in the US Neo-avantgarde as it coincided with the Andy Warhol exhibition of the Elvis Presley stenciled series at the Ferus Gallery (held in September and October), the Claes Oldenburg exhibition at Dawn Gallery (October) which included fake furniture sculptures and, as a climax of it all, it literally coincided with the Marcel Duchamp retrospective exhibition at Pasadena Art Museum (October and November). The coincidence of these four exhibitions transformed Los Angeles in one of the most relevant epicenters in the transfiguration of the avant-garde strategies to the US context of the early '60s (Allan, 2010: 240).

In this environment, Duchamp's offspring was adopting different object production strategies, being seriality and repetition the most credited. Branding and anonymity were the two main features that *SBW* incorporated to the art discourse of the time. The *SBW* was a collaborative exhibition between Watts, George Brecht and Alison

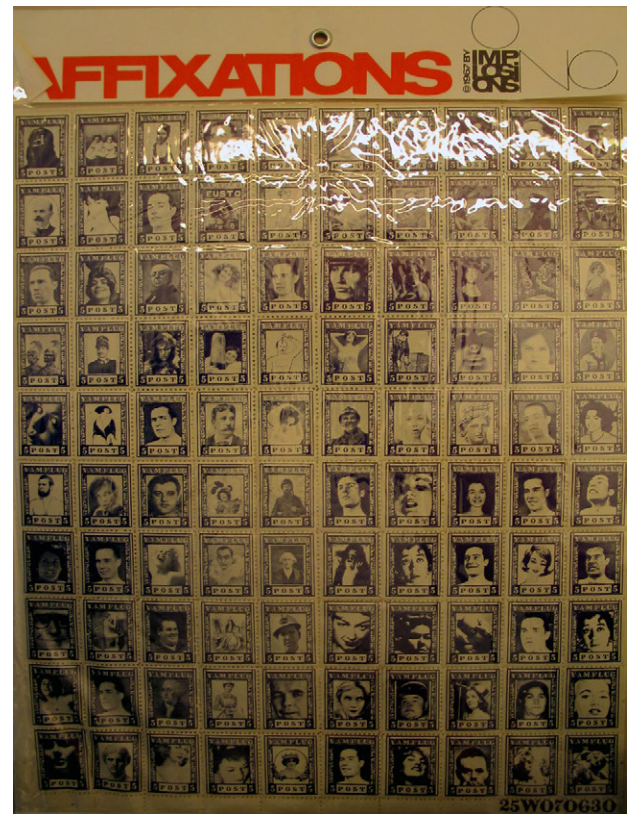


FIGURE 2. *Affixations*, Implosions Inc., 1967. (RWGRC).

Knowles. It consisted in the exhibition of many different objects which had stenciled on the word 'blink.' Everything in the exhibition had this word stamped on: 'jewelry, gloves, light bulbs, lunch boxes, bathroom tissue, record labels' (Siedenbaum, 1963: 2). It is revealing to view this exhibition as a projection of Duchamp's ideas since such stenciled objects might seem, at first light, the perfect representation of the 'aided ready-made.' Duchamp himself described this form of ready-made in a lecture organized at MoMA in occasion of the exhibit *The Art of Assemblage* (1961).⁵ In this seminal lecture, Duchamp defined the aided ready-made as a chosen object to which 'a graphic detail of presentation' had been added so as to please his liking of puns and jokes.

It should also be reminded that his lecture, incredibly concise, also included an explicit warning on the dangers of the ready-made procedure: its *undiscriminated repetition* which, for whom, led to a conscious limitation of its production. This lecture is one of the most relevant documents of the US Neo-avantgarde but, furthermore, Maciunas did attend to this lecture and therefore its influence is more than recognized in the Fluxus context. It is quite evident that *SBW* was interpreting Duchamp's formula in quite a peculiar ways since these artists were clearly doing 'aided ready-mades,' but in doing so they were also flagrantly representing its danger: repeating the formula in every single object contained in the exhibition, exactly what Duchamp feared. These dangers were so vividly

present at *SBW* that even the visitors could bring an object of their choice to have 'blink' stenciled on.

Anonymity was another main concern in *SBW* as represented by a stenciled painting which hung on the gallery walls in serial repetition [Fig. 3]. In an evocation of the surrealist 'exquisite corpse' formula the painting was composed of three images by each of the artists: Watts did the tribal image at the top, Brecht included the word 'blink' and Knowles designed three silver scissors at the bottom.⁶ At the moment of the exhibition, intending to maintain anonymity, the three artists had agreed on not revealing who had designed each part of the picture. The individual artist subject was further removed by using *SBW* intended as a company front name.

The best way to see how this branding operation, which in fact meant rejecting subjectivity, was understood at the moment is by focusing on the local press. In just a period of four days, the *Los Angeles Times* printed two reviews of this exhibition and their differences are telling: the earlier took the exhibition as a critique of Pop art while the second saw it as an implicit affirmation of

Pop art strategies. Arguing on the repetition of the word 'Blink' the first review⁷ assumed, quite superficially, its opposition to Pop art when saying 'Will there be any rival pickets armed with cans of soup? Angry cartoons chalked with the POW language of Pop art for captions?' The director of the gallery also addressed this same line of thought when he stated that he did not care if they sold nothing, since they tried to 'make a statement.' As an anecdote, this was exactly what happened at Warhol's Campbell soup exhibit only a year before. Since that article appeared, the assumption that the *SBW* exhibition opened a true alternative to the consumption in Pop art has passed from generation to generation, and it is how nowadays is generally understood. As is assumed in this line of interpretation, it is precisely the *SBW* literal use of the ready-made what determines its opposition to Pop art.

As is well known, branding was among the most relevant creative strategies of the time. Although in the case of the *SBW* exhibition it implied a sort of overwhelming strategy, it is difficult to know how it established a difference with previous examples of its use as Warhol's Camp-



FIGURE 3. Robert Watts, Robert Watts, Untitled (Lette Einsenhauer performing at *Scissors Brothers' Warehouse* (from now on *SBW*), held at the Rolf Nelson Gallery, 1963. Robert Watts Paper Collection, (RWGRC).

bell soup exhibition at the Ferus Gallery held the previous year. This is why the assumptions made by the newspaper are difficult to understand: how could the obsessive repetition of a brand's name be understood as a critique of Pop art when Pop artists themselves were using exactly that same strategy? How could the same strategy be seen as an affirmation of commercial culture in one context and as a critique in another?

Evidently, *SBW* was inserting itself in the same path taken by Pop artists, especially Warhol and Oldenburg who, as previously noted, were actually exhibiting at the same time very few miles away. However, how this exhibition interpreted the ideas behind Pop art is obscure. The idea that the repetitions behind Pop and *SBW* were very similar is clear by the fact that within a year Watts exhibited along with Warhol and Oldenburg in an exhibition under the populist title *The American Supermarket* in Bianchini Gallery. In fact, Lette Eisenhower, performer at Oldenburg's *Store days* (1961), did also intervene in the opening of *SBW*, where she performed at the gallery space, transformed into a bedroom, with 'blink' clothes on.

Pop's influence on Fluxus was even recognized when Maciunas blamed Warhol for copying all of his ideas as quoted above. Maciunas did not comment any further on Warhol, awkward in an artist famous for his expulsions and visceral rejections. It was quite the opposite for Oldenburg, a figure who generated great admiration in relevant Fluxus artists including Maciunas himself and Dick Higgins (Knowles' husband by the time). The first time that Maciunas was confronted with Oldenburg's work was in Wiesbaden, where Maciunas worked as a designer for the US Army during 1962. In an undated letter, Maciunas listed some artists names, Oldenburg among them, for Higgins to comment on for their possible appearance in a *Fluxus Diagram*. Higgins answered:

C. Oldenburg- he is a realist of a wholly original cast. For example, when he wanted to do a work on a store, he went out and rented a store, made half representational goods to put on the shelves (clocks, that didn't work, they had nothing inside them, painted cardboard candies, boxes labeled *RCA Phonographs* that were empty, and so on).⁸

These words left Maciunas eager to "get Oldenburg" under the wing of Fluxus, especially in the early '60s when realism was a main feature in the art debate (Robinson, 2010). Maciunas was well aware of the centrality of realism in Fluxus and, accordingly, for several months he tried unsuccessfully to get Oldenburg under Fluxus. Apparently, Maciunas had to wait until 1965 to coordinate the production and distribution of some works by Oldenburg that were to be included in the *Fluxus Yearbox 2*. Among these were *Udder* and *Flower Rubbers*, *Thin Clothing Bulbs* (a shirt with light bulbs), and *False Food Selection* (a sample of food products —fried eggs, tomatoes, i.e.— made of plastic material) (Hendricks, 1988: 411). The similitude with some of Implosions objects is quite clear.

After considering the influences that Pop art had on many Fluxus artists, the idea that the *SBW* exhibition was meant to oppose Pop art itself becomes unclear. Even assuming the differences between Warhol and Oldenburg, it is still not clear that *SBW* was a critique of the path taken by the artists of Pop. It was not even generally assumed at the moment as revealed by the second *LA Times* review of this exhibition which, published as noted only four days following the first one, left aside any trace of this criticism.⁹ Even more, this second review even fails to mention that *SBW* was a camouflage for the artists' names taking literally deception as fact. In a way this assumption removed any criticism that branding, as a critical strategy of Pop art, could possibly have in the exhibition. Brand image went from critical to an assumed principle.

In this field of tensions we should also consider that Oldenburg and Warhol were both focusing on the representation of commodities and not on commodity itself: the Campbell soup cans were a representation of the actual cans and not the real thing. And so were Oldenburg's furniture sculptures since you could not use them as functional objects. This was quite the contrary in the case of the *SBW* exhibit where what was exhibited coincided with merchandise itself. Even the 'blink' paintings stressed this idea: they did not depict any entity outside of themselves, they were not a representation of anything such as a can of soup or furniture. They were paintings to be sold in a gallery. In fact Watts himself described these objects as 'merchandise.'

The set of references that Watts associated with the *SBW* can be first found in his memo *Research in New Forms: A Study of Random and Non-Random Events as Applied to Constructions, Environments and Art Games*,¹⁰ a project financed by the Research Service of the University of Douglas. The origins of this research project trace back to the more credited *Project in Multiple Dimensions* (1958), written with Allan Kaprow and George Brecht (rep. in Marter, 1990). This last one stands out as one of the main examples in the amplification of the formal limits of art production at the end of the '60s.

Following that path, *Research in New Forms* also aimed at surpassing traditional media and received funding in 1961-2 and again in 1962-3. However his understanding of the *SBW* exhibition was introduced in the 1964 research project review which also contained and explanation of his resumé. In this later document Watts described that *SBW* "consist[ed] in anonymous paintings and merchandise including newspaper, stationery and stamps."¹¹ The text confirms that 'merchandise' was one of those new paths of artistic research.

Between 1964 and 1967, Watts' work established a debate between Fluxus and Pop aesthetics that make his oeuvre one of the most elusive. His event oriented multimedia works were combined with game based works, the pedagogical Experimental Workshop, the nascent electronic arts and chrome objects. 1966 was important for Watts in the transition from this type of work to Implosions. Many what he designed that year was easily transferred to Implosions, which reaffirms the idea that the evolution of Fluxus

naturally flowed into this commercial company. Watts' 1966 Bianchini Gallery exhibition contained the dinners which, in modified versions, were essential to Implosions. Photos¹² from the opening shows model Lette Eisenhauer wearing a translucent plastic dress with feathers inside [Fig. 4]. This garment attested to another commonality between Implosions and Watts' previous projects: the interest in fashion—or as Watts himself put it 'clothing as a new form'¹³—that Implosions so consistently aimed for. Soon after this exhibition, Watts' student, Pamela Kraft, became the preferred model at Implosions.

IMPLOSIONS PRODUCTS: HANDMADE FACTORY PRODUCTION

Maciunas and Watts dedicated 1967 almost entirely to Implosions, as evidenced by the attention they lavished on the objects they both designed for the company. Among these designs, the t-shirts deserves closer attention. There were three t-shirt series: the 'front and back series' were based on a simple game of words printed on both sides, establishing a dialogue between them: 'save me / from you,' 'LOVE / me,' 'satisfaction / guaranteed,'

'here I come / there I go.' In this line one design fully accomplished that tautological spirit: 'Front' was printed on the front and 'Back' on the back¹⁴. Another series consisted of prints only on the front with, for example, the word 'Implosions' or 'Tribalize,' a reference to McLuhan [Fig. 5]. Indeed a shirt with 'McLuhan' written on the front was also intended to be produced; as the media theorist apparently did not agree with the project, a shirt with his face actually came to be fully produced [Fig. 6]. For this 'name' series, which was partly produced, some other personalities were considered: Lenny Bruce, Allan Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Bogart and Monroe. Even a series on 'Warhol Movie Stars Shirts'¹⁵ was being prepared.

Some other kind of objects seemed to propel the intended joke. A pair of glasses, which was really four of them, since each pair was attached to each other conforming a square through which to stick in one's head. Like this last one many objects never materialized: hats, inflatable pillows, bags, throw-away shopping bags, 'special food and refrigerator,' ashtrays, furniture, dishes, 'psychedelic goods'¹⁶ and even inflatable landscapes and seascapes (these ones were to be designed by 'Roy,' probably Lichtenstein)¹⁷.



FIGURE 4. Robert Watts, Untitled (Lette Eisenhauer at Robert Watts' Bianchini Gallery One-man Show), 1966. Robert Watts Paper Collection, (RWGRC).

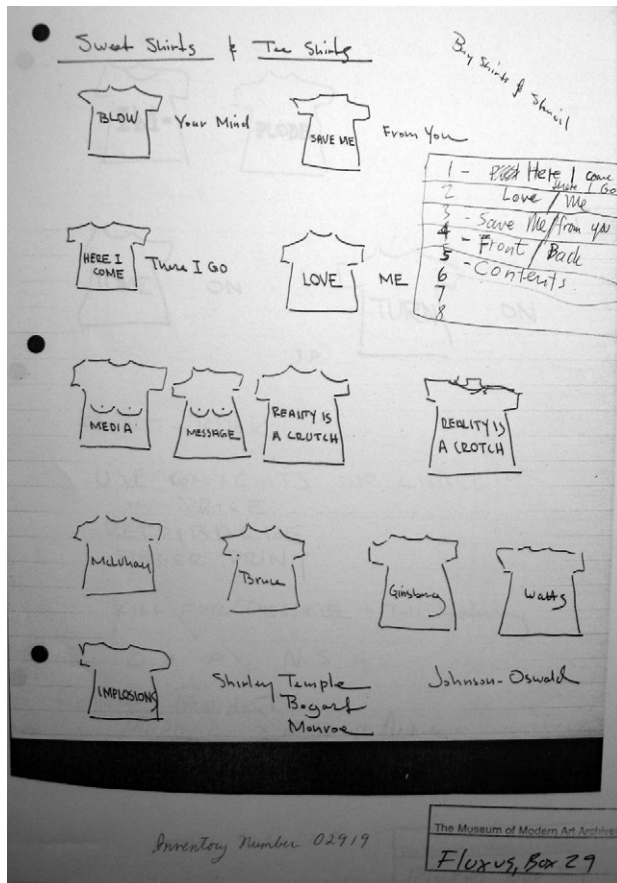


FIGURE 5. Robert Watts, unpublished document with T-Shirt designs for Implosions Inc. undated, ca. 1967. Lila & Gilbert Silverman Collection, Moma Queens. (L&GSC MoMA).

All these products relate easily to art's long history in factory production. However, the case of Implosions Inc. reveals that artists were not the ones adopting avant-gardist methods of mass-production. It was industrial production what had introduced art as one of its main areas of development: during the '60s industrial production tried to address more specific and diversified publics and, in doing so, the visual appearance and symbolic dimension of their products became a main area of development. New techniques of paper, plastic, object and fabric printing gave way to objects that looked both mass produced and personalized. Watts and Maciunas' archives show the close attention they both paid to these means of industrial production, especially image printing on any kind of object. All these ways of object production were accessible to a vast public by request, order or mail order. As a result, Implosions Inc. never physically produced any object but instead requested objects (such as pens, shirts, etc.) to companies specialized in personalizing their products.

As early as 1963, Watts ordered some pens with the word 'Yam' imprinted on them from a company named 'Miracle,¹⁸' which were used for the homonymous festival done with George Brecht that same year. This same procedure was used when Watts sent Implosions shirt de-

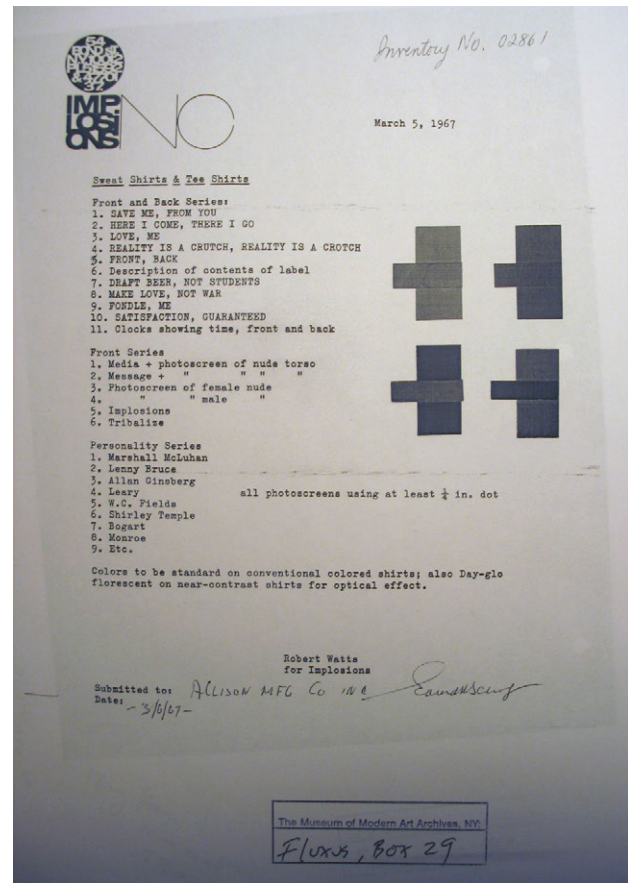


FIGURE 6. Robert Watts to Allison Mfg. Co. unpublished letter dated March 5, 1965. L&GSC MoMA, inv. no. 02861.

signs to Allison Mfg. Co.¹⁹ which was specialized in shirt printing [Fig. 7]. Even if Maciunas and Watts mentioned "production" and "industry," they did not get involved into serial production *per se*: they requested, ordered and assembled many of Implosion Inc. objects but it appears that never actually physically "produced" them. This procedure is even more confusing if we pay attention to Watts description of Maciunas' way of producing objects as 'handmade' (Miller, 1999: 92).

Mentioning factory production, but only reaching its products by mail-shopping or in the Canal Street area, meant that industrial production was reduced to its symbolic dimension, to the set of ideals chained to it. And indeed this production symbolism did still received recognition in the context of Fluxus, specially under the idea of functionalism. Maciunas was clever enough to update the concept:

I was interested in functionalism so therefore when I came and designed aprons I designed aprons that had something to do with the shape that was going to cover you. So for instance one version was the Venus de Milo, both sides blown up so that when you covered your, from neck to knee, you were covered with this Venus de

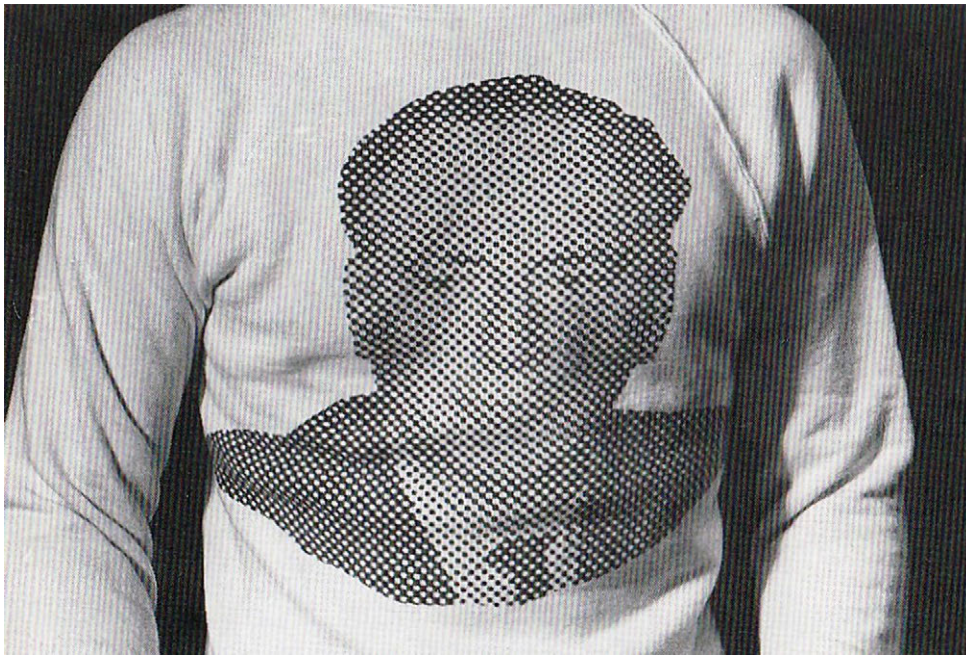


FIGURE 7. Robert Watts, untitled (sweatshirt with Marshall McLuhan face), ca. 1967. L&GSC MoMA.

Milo -photographic image. Okay. Or another apron was image of a stomach right on top of your stomach. So, I would call that functionalism. Now it can be applied to everything (Miller, 1983, 23).

Maciunas' designs embody the functionalist ideals in its purest essence. Even the qualities of transparency, essential for the functionalist architecture tradition (Medina, 2003: 253), were implied in this quote. Yet this full embodiment of functionalism was also contradictory, even irrational: a Venus de Milo printed on an apron is not at all functional, except for a radically strict formal understanding of functionalism itself! [Fig. 8]. The irrationality of Maciuna's understanding of functionalism — showing what is hidden— is quite evident if we pay attention to the many objects to which it was applied: shirts with breasts and hairy chests, swimming suits with chests and crotches (for her, fully produced and for him, only designed) [Fig. 9], even underwear with a feminine flower and a penis printed on (this one said to 'belong' to sculptor John Chamberlain) (Hendricks, 1998, 555) [Figs. 10 & 11]. It looks as if Maciunas was taking functionalism to a dead-end precisely by putting it to play literally, transforming it into a senseless sign. As a result, his paradoxical understanding of the term 'functionalism' perfectly embodies the transformation of function into a matter of mere appearances, an accusation that Baudrillard did on Pop art's consumption aesthetics (Baudrillard, 1989: 39). It should be noted that Baudrillard's distinction is key in the advent of the postindustrial (and postfordist) culture ramping since the mid '70s.

How functionalism as sign was championed at Implosions is best seen with the ads they published to sell

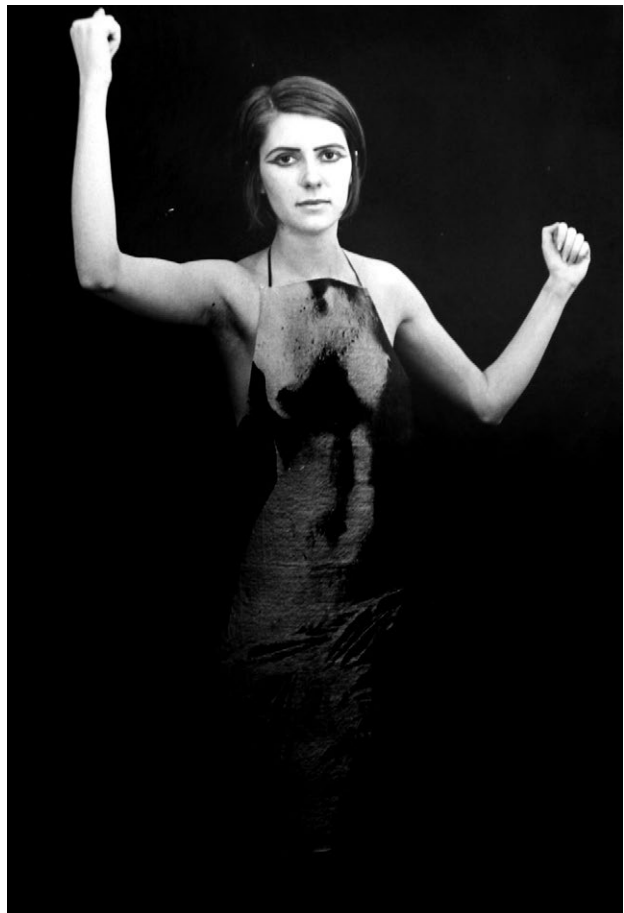


FIGURE 8. Robert Watts, untitled, undated, ca. 1967. (RWGRC).



FIGURE 9. Unknown photographer, Watts with Various Products from Implosions Inc. (in the lower right side, before the bikini apron, the female swimming suit with a female torso image can be seen), 1968. (RWGRC).



FIGURE 10. Implosions Inc. Female underwear. 1967.

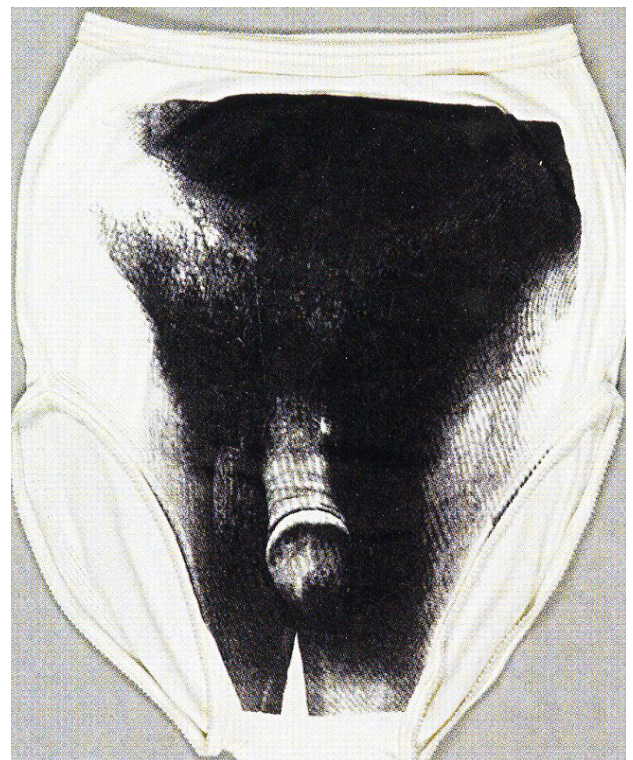


FIGURE 11. Implosions Inc. Male underwear. 1967.

their products. For example, in July 1967 the local magazine *East Village Other* published an ad for Implosions' underwear designed by Maciunas that displayed two crotches, the male's with a censored band and the fe-

male's still with the decorative flower [Fig. 12]. On July 9, 1967, *The New York Times*²⁰ published an article on tattoos and body stickers that showed some Implosions stick-on tattoos [Figs. 13 & 14]. The article highlighted the

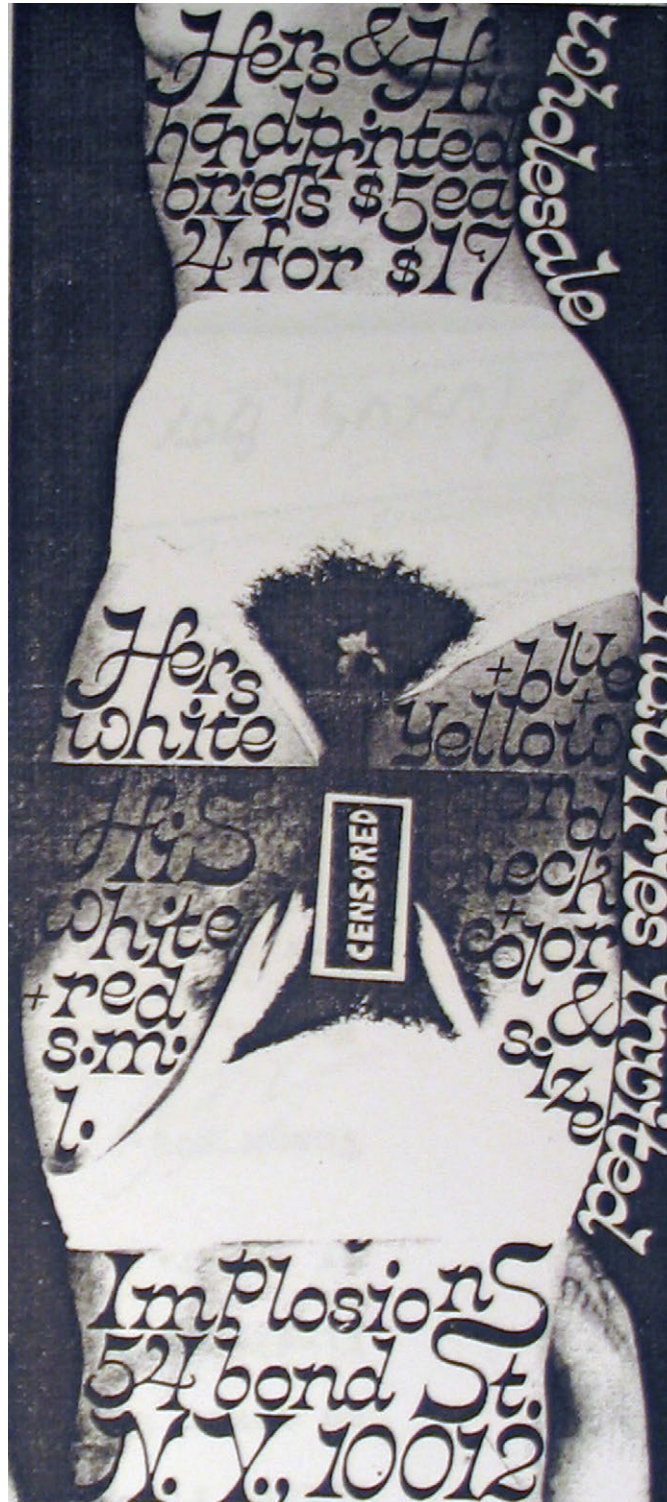


FIGURE 12. George Maciunas (design), Implosions Announcement in *East Village Other*, undated, ca. 1967. L&GSC MoMA.



Photographed by Gosta Peterson.

Left—
Enormous blue snake, a vinyl stick-on to coil about the arm, is only one design from a package of eleven. By Tiger Morse. \$5 the package. The Super-Market, Franklin Simon.

Right—
Marvelous multicolored gypsy head perches on the shoulder. This, a vinyl stick-on, by Implosions. \$1.25 for a sheet with eight to twelve assorted designs. At Paraphernalia.



FIGURE 13. Patricia Peterson, "Painted ladies". *The New York Times*, July 9, 1967: 186 (detail).



FIGURE 14. Implosions Inc., *Stick-on Tattos*, 1967. (RWGRC).

seduction implied by the products with close ups of the models' body parts with stickers. As far as we know, there were no more ads on Implosions, but Watts' archive

contains several pictures of women with tattoos on their bodies that were clearly meant to be used for an advertising campaign [Figs., 15 & 16].



FIGURE 15. Robert Watts, untitled, ca. 1967. (RWGRC).



FIGURE 16. Robert Watts, untitled, ca. 1967. (RWGRC).

THE IMPOSSIBLE PERFORMANCE OF THE MASS

Around 1967, Maciunas hand copied Henry Dreyfuss' *Joe and Josephine Anthropometric Chart*, (1955) changing the dummies names to 'Robert' and 'Pamela,' a humorous reference to Watts a Pamela Kraft. Published in 1955, Dreyfuss' chart is one of the best examples of modern ergonomic design since it allowed for anything to be designed efficiently, so that the product fits the body [Fig. 17]. After this basic chart, Dreyfuss published some others around 1967 with dummies of different ages which amplified the general social scope of the earlier chart. Nevertheless, the 1955 chart is memorable for the precision with which it intended to represent the wide majority, an ideal mass of consumers. Was Maciunas, a trained architect and designer, also addressing the kind of undistinguished public generally acknowledged under the term 'masses'? And if so, was this done under the aegis of a nostalgic past, as is common in references of a lost compact community?

Many of Maciunas' letters and ideas testify that Implosions, and along with it Fluxus itself, was meant to ad-

dress certain understanding of collectivity; it projected some sort of ideal collectivism. Is his letter to Vytautas Lansbergis, Maciunas referred to the Fluxus project as 'socialist' and even 'folk art.' 'It's not made for specialists, critics, artists and other intellectuals. Such art can be created, understood and performed by all, by the educated and non-educated. It's made for all' (reproduced in Stegman, 2007: 65). This quote attest that for Fluxus, the ideal public was meant to be an unspecified "all."

In fact, Fluxus was a field of exploration for ways of essaying new forms of collectivity, group-formation in an environment in which such concepts had completely been erased from the political discourse. In doing so Fluxus developed into one of the most radical attacks of one of the main ideological tools in Cold War political and economic transformation: individualism. During Fluxus' early years, Maciunas wrote many letters in which stated that Fluxus represented a campaign to erase the self off. For example, in March 1964 Maciunas wrote Ben Vautier, who was known for signing anything with childish penmanship: "Why not try zen method — curb & eliminate your ego entirely (if you can) don't sign anything— don't attribute anything to yourself— depersonalize yourself! [T]hat's in the Fluxus collective spirit. DE-EUROPEANIZE YOUR-SELF!" (rep. in Dreyfuss, 1989: 183).

In the letter to Tomas Schmidt in which Maciunas listed Fluxus social objectives, he clarified the ideas behind "Europeanization." 'Fluxus therefore should tend towards collective spirit, anonymity and ANTI- INDIVIDUALISM also ANTI-EUROPEANISM (Europe being the place supporting most strongly —& even originating the idea of— professional artist, art for art ideology, expression of artist ego through art etc. etc.' (Maciunas, 2002: 163). This anti-Europeanism campaign was so important for Maciunas that he even included it in the *Purge Manifesto*, one of the most important documents of the '60s Neo-avantgarde.

In a way, Maciunas was incorporating one of the main Cold War debates between individualism, as it was being developed on liberal countries, and collectivity, a core concept for the Communist states. The individualism/collectivism debate crosses Cold War cultural studies in almost every field of knowledge, from history and philosophy to psychology and work management.²¹ However what is interesting in Maciunas adoption of such a debate is its extreme particularism: he not only got to know the debate in a very specific environment (his university studies) but also meant a breakdown of biographical expectations. In fact, his affiliation and defense of collectivism, which would have been developed further by Fluxus as he stated it, is still, to this day, a mystery. His family history reveals that a stance in supporting liberal individualism would have been a natural unfolding of facts. His mother, a classic ballet dancer, left her natal Russia for Lithuania where she married George's father, a prominent engineer who worked both in the Lithuanian and German universities. The end of World War II forced the Maciunas' to move first to western Germany and then, thanks to the "American Christian Committee for Refugees," to the US.

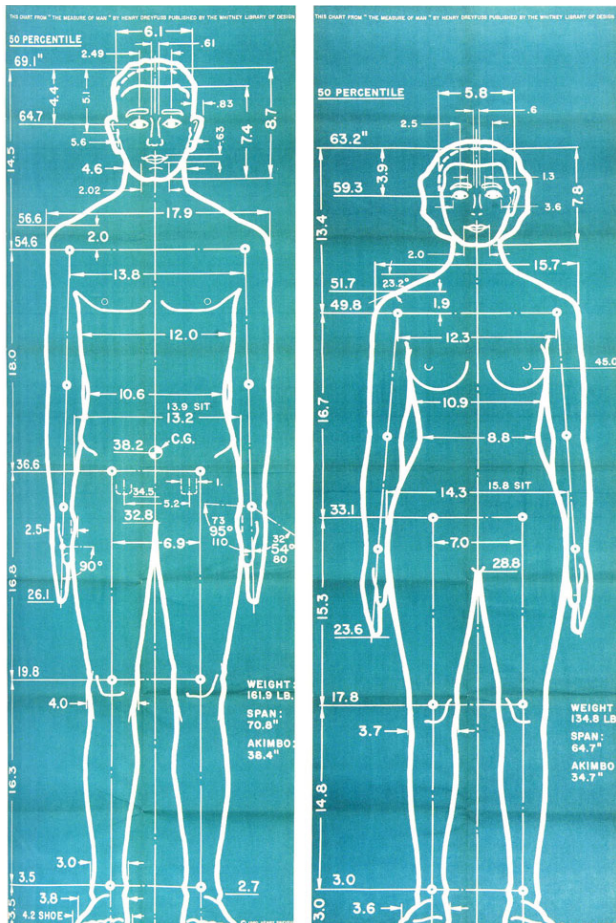


FIGURE 17. Henry Dreyfuss (design), *Joe and Josephine Anthropometric Chart*, 1955.

Maciunas' links with the Lithuanian émigré culture in the US, clearly against the USSR government, are quite clear. One of his first friends was Almus Salcius, who had a gallery in his hometown which exhibited paintings by East Europe artists. The also Lithuanian émigré Jonas Mekas, who later became the famous underground film maker, was also among his first friends. His friendship with Mekas was lifelong and, as a matter of fact, one of the first jobs that Maciunas received as a designer was in *Film Culture*, Mekas' influential publication. Maciunas' designing responsibilities in the magazine lasted for many years—with sporadic periods off.

His involvement with the Lithuanian US community continued in this guise until 1960, when a lecture he was organizing on *realist music*, to be held at the Baltic Freedom House in NY, was rejected due to the obvious assumptions of the term 'realism.' It was then that Maciunas started to become involved with a whole different kind of social group, such as that conformed by the avant-garde musicians that gathered around John Cage classes, Yoko Ono's loft concerts and some other peripheral venues.²² An interesting coincidence was that the Baltic Cultural Center lecture was meant at obtaining funds to publish the 'Lithuanian culture magazine Fluxus.' It is not hard to think of these series of events as a succession of a naturally given collectivity, as that based on nationality or cultural background, into a new form of group setting, as that of an avant-gardists. Since then, Maciunas advocacy for concepts such as collectivism, anti-ego, anti-individualism etc. increased in a very peculiar way as it was shown in the aforementioned letter to Tomas Schmidt.

His proposition of transforming Fluxus into a collective of individual-less artists—or anti-artists, as it was sometimes alleged—can be thought as a main attack to the core of the individualist discourse of the Cold War. According to 'his Fluxus,' artists had to be selfless, had to reject any trace of individuality, and had to quit being artists, the most individualist profession for him.

There was a close relationship between his anti-ego agenda and his previous interest in Modern Russian History, fact being demonstrated in his signing up to a class on the subject in 1953 at Carnegie College. As a result of this course, Maciunas assembled a "map of translucent pages" in which he described the different steps of Russian history up until the revolutionary years. On the pages of this map, extensively researched by Schmidt-Burkhardt (2003), he portrays a biased traditional Russian debate between the "Westerism and Slavophilism" tendencies. Such a debate took place during a great part of the 19th century, although being still active in the Russian debate during the first years of the 20th century. As he wrote in one of these maps (rep. in Schmidt-Burkhardt (2003: 53), Maciunas understood such a debate as a set of oppositions between the West and the East. One of such oppositions was formed by the pair individualism/collectivism which reflects correspondingly what the West and the East would stand for. Such a link between geography and ideology, undertaken by Maciunas in this map and in

many of his documents, explains his constant projects to "go east" with the Fluxus collective to settle in the USSR and live by the shows they would plan then on. Maciunas' long for the USSR, as Medina (2006) and Stegman (2007: 16) have indeed described, drew him to write to the USSR government in the early '60s to offer Fluxus as the cultural policy that, after social realism's failure, would place USSR culture to the heights of the pre- and post revolutionary periods. No reply has ever been found.

Maciunas' anti-individualist or anti-ego crusade follows closely the idea of the masses, a concept which, since Gustave Le Bon and Sigmund Freud, implies the loss of individuality, especially under the form of crowds. Implosions was clearly charged with this ambition to address the masses. Mass production, whether mechanized or not, whether accomplished or merely proposed, was one of Maciunas' concerns when he got involved in the project. The fact that Implosions works were sold in normal stores like Paraphernalia—a clothing store in downtown Manhattan—or even JC Penny's for very low prices, bespeaks of getting involved in a market that lacked art's social distinctions. His understanding of the masses is then quite peculiar: unlike 19th century theories, which deeply criticized the concept, for Maciunas it seems to embody a fully utopian social ideal.

Meanwhile, Pop art was trying to subvert the contents of the gallery, making them apparently low brow, comical or even banal, but its social base was kept intact. Even more: Pop art renewed its actors without changing its structure. The clear social distinctions within the art field, therefore, were reproduced in Pop. In contrast, the social reach of Implosions did not ambition the gallery goers who bought works of art that looked like ads and soup cans: Implosions went public using normal stores—not art galleries—and advertised itself in everyday newspapers—not specialized press—without acknowledging any relation to art at all. Actually much of the humorous effects that its products provoked can still be seen in cheap objects of mass consumption, such as those found in current cheap gift stores with shirts imprinted with muscled-guys and bikini girls images. Shirts that embody yet another understanding of the mass ornament: covering the body with another image may be the result of a functionalist mind, such as Maciunas', but it nevertheless implies the visual substitution of one's own body for another image. It is therefore no surprise that body camouflage was in fact an important feature in Kracauer's mass ornament since for him the combination of bodily movements, as that of the Tiller Girls dances, implied such a coordination of bodies that in conclusion made the self disappear.²³

Maciunas' proposal was shortcutting any notion of universal subjectivity and supporting one of the most menacing social concepts of modernity: the crowd, the masses. The radicalism of such a proposition is rare at the moment even among cultural theorists known for incorporating the popular in the academic debate. Only two years before Implosions was formed, Stuart Hall writing along with Paddy Whannel argued that "mass-art" should be re-

jected since it ‘often destroys all trace of individuality,’ producing a work where ‘the personal element becomes detached’ (Hall and Whannel, 1965: 67). Coincidentally, ‘Mass-art’ was also the name of a contemporaneous company with Implosions formed by artists Philip Orenstein, Sujan Souri and Dorian Godoy, which Maciunas understood as ‘competitors.’ Against this general understanding of the masses as sinister, Maciunas was exactly celebrating the masses: the masses meant the erasure of the ego in favor of an ideal selfless commonality in which cooperation would follow directly.

It is quite clear that Maciunas’ projects were a result of a great dose of determination, effort and a limitless imagination. His confidence in the plausibility of some of his projects means that for him anything, now matter how weird or strange, could be accomplished. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that many of his thoughts challenge the generally assumed or normally implied. His lack of theoretical discourse is an example of this. Although having been interested in the Russian history, having wanted to become part of the USSR cultural policy and having been active in politics in the US, his lack of knowledge of the Marxist theory stands out as one of his most evident peculiarities. At least to my knowledge, he did not even write the word “Marx” or any of its variations, although being a self-declared socialist. His clearest political involvement took place in 1965 when designing and partly participating in Henry Flynt’s “Communists Must Give Revolutionary Leadership in Culture.” In a moment when Flynt and Maciunas felt close to Sam Marcy’s “Workers World Party,” such publication was aimed at pointing out what the USSR Cultural Policy should do after the failure of its social realism agenda. Maciunas’ participation actually entailed the denunciation of USSR massive building policies which he esteemed un-efficient. As a solution, he proposed a prefabricated building system based on industrially prefabricated patterns assembled on site. His design, with a Japanese garden as the inner core of the construction, stands out as an impossible combination of Soviet-influenced efficiency and Asian exoticism.

More or less the same could be said about his knowledge of the Marxist theorists of the time such as Theodor Adorno or Walter Benjamin. Although it is possible that he knew about Adorno,²⁴ it is not quite clear to what extreme he could manage with his theories. In any case, if Maciunas would have known in depth Adorno’s work, he would have probably rejected it, simply because the latter’s critique on culture industry and its pursued effect, amusement, does not match at all with the former defense of *Flux-Amusement* as proposed in a 1965 homonymous manifesto. In that manifesto, Maciunas actually argued in favor of works that embraced *vaudeville amusement satire* which would be understood by Adorno as coincident with the culture industry’s objectives. Actually, Maciunas’ defense of anti-intellectualism, of *good and healthy laughs*, is influenced by Spike Jones’s show which, broadcasted in the late ‘50s US television to celebrate special festivities, was a main venue for family enjoy-

ment and massive deception.²⁵ Even Maciunas and Flynt picketing of Karlheinz Stockhausen’s concert in 1964 was justified on some commentaries on Jazz that the German composer had allegedly done during a previous visit to the US.²⁶ And, as is commonly known, Adorno’s dislike for Jazz was as essential to his music theory as unfair to that music style.

The case with Benjamin is different since in the late fifties and early sixties his ideas were on the verge of being discovered. It is however undeniable that, in some issues, Maciunas ran very close to Benjamin, specially his ideas on *The Author as Producer* and on the commodity form, a text that was to be translated some years after, in 1970. However, as this essay has tried to present, this close relationship between Maciunas and Benjamin should be questioned, specially in what concerns to the assumption that Maciunas embodied the essence of the artist as producer.

The fact that Maciunas aimed at producing Implosions merchandise on a massive level, using the new technical advances is undeniable, as it is that he failed in doing so: as Watts declared, Maciunas enterprise was mainly handmade.²⁷ In fact, the term “production” should be incredibly widen in order to fit Maciunas way of production: buying translucent plastic boxes in nearby shops, mail-ordering printed-shirts, or pens with specific inscriptions and — probably— iron printing images on shirts, underwear and swimsuits is nevertheless an awkward intervention on the production system. Even more so if considering that these ways of production were available to a vast majority of the public who actually used them at will.

Being unable to accomplish one’s goals should not be the measuring rule for an artist work. Maciunas was simply using what he had at hand. More relevant is another issue in Benjamin’s text, such as the kind of intervention in the production system. According to Benjamin’s text, the “decisive difference between merely transmitting the apparatus of production and transforming it” (Benjamin, 1998: 93) was an essential one since it could mean the basic difference between the right and the wrong “ideological” tendency (that is, between being a bourgeois or a revolutionary artist).

The idea that Maciunas was transforming the production system is very doubtful as we have just seen. But even more so if considering that many of the Implosions items were to become a part of the fashion industry —another essential topic in Benjamin’s theories. The fact that fashion was the quintessence of the fetish-commodity form for Benjamin was unimportant to Maciunas. For the latter, the main idea was to “produce some money-producing products,” easily salable although cheap in price. This is probably why Watts was essential to the project: his trajectory from the readymade to producing merchandise made him the best bet for a company based on merchandise itself. However, there was something else in Implosions: the participation of the artists in the design also added an extra immaterial value. This meant that he perfectly understood the ongoing commodification of the artist in the value process, something that only contempora-

neously has received critical attention (Jones: 2006). But, in addition, he also fetishized use-value: the practical nature of the objects became essential in Implosions although it was never achieved as the uneasy-to-use aprons and swim suits clearly attest for. This is why, even more perfectly than Warhol himself, Maciunas represents the "art of consumption:" as Baudrillard would put it, simply because Maciunas performs the perfect transformation of use-value into market-value, evaporating therefore the last standing point that Marxism could still hold on to.

Already by 1967 it was quite clear that the main actors of the socio-political scenario had reconfigured. The ego had become more diversified and less universal, while the couple and the new subcultures reinvigorated a new image of the self. Henry Dreyfuss' later design charts addressed this diversity as children, the overgrown, the elderly and pregnant women appeared in newer editions of his books. The image of the masses should be then seen as the resistant face of Implosions; while reviving a way of thinking about collectivity it rejected what every other cultural form was pushing forward: the production of subjectivity. It is in this sphere where Fluxus and Pop art show the extreme contradictions between the individual and the common.

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NOTES

- 1 "Unverstanden blieb dabei das genuine Protestpotential ästhetischer Praktiken der sechziger Jahre in den USA, die die Erbschaft der historischen Avantgarden unter veränderten Bedingungen angetreten hatten. Das hatte nun freilich mit Beat, Porno, Acid, und Underground weniger zu tun als mit Cage und Rauschenberg, Warhol und Fluxus, Minimal und Concept art der New Yorker Szene" (Huyssen, 2001: 43-44). "Misunderstood remained the genuine protest potential of the aesthetic practices of the sixties in the US which inherited the historical avant-gardist tradition in rather different circumstances. Indeed this had to do less with Beat, Porn, Acid, and Underground than with Cage and Rauschenberg, Warhol and Fluxus, Minimal and Concept art in the New York scene". (Our translation).
- 2 Letter from George Maciunas to Vytautas Landsbergis dated February, 1963. Facsimile reproduced in Stegman, 2007: 65.
- 3 Herman Fine, George Maciunas and Robert Watts, unpublished undated typewritten document under the headline "Proposal" (ca. 1967). Lila & Gilbert Silverman Collection, MoMA Queens Research Library (from now on L&GSC MoMA), box 29, inv. no. 02871.
- 4 Another document by R. Watts added artists (Karel) Apple, (Aaron) Kuriloff, (James) Rosenquist and Roy Lichtenstein as future designers. Robert Watts, unpublished, undated, handwritten document under the headline "projected products" (ca. 1967). L&GSC MoMA, box 29, inv. no. 2880-1. A *New York Times* article declared that Implosions Inc. was going to produce designs by Peter Max, Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg and Aaron Kuriloff. In Glueck, Grace (1969) "If it's Art What You Want, Try Your Supermarket". *The New York Times*, August 8, 1969: 99.
- 5 Marcel Duchamp, "A Propos of ready mades" in William Seitz *et al.*, *The Art of Assemblage*, unpublished, (1967). Transcription of the recorded symposium held at MoMA on October 19, 1961.
- 6 One of the most vivid descriptions of this exhibition is Simon Anderson's (1990: 100-104).
- 7 Art Siedenbaum, "Anti-art Goes Out on Limb," *Los Angeles Times* [LAT], 3 November 1963: 2.
- 8 Handwritten letter from Dick Higgins to George Maciunas, undated (ca. beginning of 1962). Catalogued as 62-1, Harry Sohm Archive. Staatsgalerie, Dusseldorf (from now on HSA, Duss.).
- 9 Henry Seldis, "Dial \$1-0-0-0 for plastic pay phone," *LAT*, 11 November 1963: d8.
- 10 Robert Watts, *Research in New forms: a study of random and non-random events as applied to constructions, environments and art games*, unpublished typewritten document addressed to Douglas University, undated (ca. 1961). Robert Watts Paper Collection, Getty Research Institute (from now on RWPC, GRI), box 6, folder 1.
- 11 Our highlight. Robert Watts to Research Council at Douglas University, unpublished letter dated March 19, 1964. RWPC-GRI, box 6, folder 1.
- 12 Robert Watts, unpublished pictures, 1966. RWPC, GRI, box 30. At this time Watts developed several works in the form of translucent dresses. Some other pictures from this moment show L. Eisenhower wearing a translucent dress with photos attached to it and another model, with the aforementioned feathers dress. RWPC-GRI, box 14, folder 6.
- 13 Robert Watts unpublished typewritten document under the heading "Preliminary Report on Art Seminar and Experimental Workshop", March 22, 1966. RWPC-GRI, box 6, folder 15.
- 14 Robert Watts to Allison Mfg. Co. unpublished letter dated March 5, 1965. L&GSC MoMA, inv. no. 02861.
- 15 Robert Watts, unpublished handwritten document under the heading "Printed goods", undated (ca. 1966/7). L&GSC MoMA, box 29, inv. no. 02882.
- 16 Robert Watts unpublished and undated handwritten document under the headline "Projected Products," (ca. 1966-7). L&GSC MoMA, box 29, inv. no. 2880-1/3.
- 17 Robert Watts, untitled, undated and unpublished, ca. 1966/7. L&GSC MoMA. Inv. no. 02901.
- 18 Newspaper 'Miracle' ad clipping. RWPC-GRI, box 8, folder 2.
- 19 Robert Watts to Allison Mfg. Co., letter dated March 5, 1967. L&GSC MoMA, inv. no. 02861.
- 20 Patricia Peterson, "Painted Ladies". *The New York Times*, 9 July 1967: 186.
- 21 Uichol *et al.* offer a great in depth analysis of the different paths taken by the individualist/collectivist debate.
- 22 The emergence of the Fluxus group, as traditional history puts it, is a result of many different people that gathered around the same venues. Amongst the most relevant are John Cage's classes in 1958 and 1959, Yoko Ono's concert series and along with it the 1960/61 AG Gallery concerts organized by Maciunas himself.
- 23 "The human figure enlisted in the mass ornament has begun the exodus from lush organic splendor and the constitution of individuality toward the realm of anonymity to which it relinquishes itself when it stands in truth and when the knowledge radiating from the basis of man dissolves the contours of visible natural form." (Kracauer, 1995: 85).
- 24 Adorno was a teacher at the Darmstadt Summer Music Courses to which many of Maciunas' first collaborators attended. Karlheinz Stockhausen and Herbert Eimert electronic music maga-

- zine “Die Rehie” published many essays on Adorno’s music theories. Many of its writers (Herbert himself, Hans Klaus Metzger) participated in the first Fluxus concerts.
- 25 Adorno and Horkheimer denounce of amusement is widely acknowledged since it is a key concept in their essay on culture industry. However, it is interesting to highlight how Maciunas’ rejection of intellectualism follows Adorno and Horkheimer’s rejection of amusement: “Amusement means putting things out of mind, forgetting suffering, even when it is on display. At its root is powerlessness. It is indeed scape, as it claims, escape of from bad reality but from the last thought of resisting that reality. The liberation which amusement promises is fro thinking as negation” (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002: 116).
 - 26 Flynt and Maciunas picketed Stockhausen twice in 1964. They alleged that it was based on some commentaries that the composer said on jazz in a 1958 Harvard’s University conference. Piekut has brilliantly contextualized the picket rationale in Flynt’s affiliation to the World Workers Party affiliation. Much of the WWP rhetoric was based on a confrontational opposition to racism and European domination through high culture. (Piekut, 2009 and 2011: 65-100).
 - 27 In some other occasion Watts also referred to Maciunas’ way of production for Fluxus as a “one man factory” (Kellein, 1995: 24).

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