

Episodes toward a Fluxarchitecture. The work of George Maciunas, Shadrach Woods and Joachim Pfeufer

Original

Episodes toward a Fluxarchitecture. The work of George Maciunas, Shadrach Woods and Joachim Pfeufer / Doglio, Federica. - In: ZARCH. - ISSN 2341-0531. - STAMPA. - 9(2017), pp. 208-217.

Availability:

This version is available at: 11583/2914478 since: 2021-07-21T19:14:32Z

Publisher:

Università di Zaragoza

Published

DOI:

Terms of use:

openAccess

This article is made available under terms and conditions as specified in the corresponding bibliographic description in the repository

Publisher copyright

(Article begins on next page)

Episodes toward a *Fluxarchitecture*. The work of George Maciunas, Shadrach Woods and Joachim Pfeufer

Episodios hacia una *Fluxarchitecture*. El trabajo de George Maciunas, Shadrach Woods y Joachim Pfeufer

FEDERICA DOGLIO

Federica Doglio, "Episodes toward a Fluxarchitecture. The work of George Maciunas, Shadrach Woods and Joachim Pfeufer", *ZARCH* 9 (Diciembre 2017): 208-217. ISSN: 2341-0531. http://dx.doi.org/10.26754/ojs_zarch/zarch.201792278

Received: 20-12-2016 / Accepted: 18-4-2017

Abstract

Fluxus, an artistic movement that emerged in 1960, crossed borders within the arts. Soon it expanded to include sculpture, poetry, performance, photography, and cinema, taking on a multi-disciplinary character that regularly crossed or erased borders within the arts. Its relationship to architecture, however, is more complex. In the 1960s, a few architects sought to resolve contradictions between the principles of Fluxus and the presumptions of their own field, and explored the possibilities of change —flux— in architectural practice. This article will investigate possible connections between Fluxus and the architectural practices. It considers three figures who were both theorists and architects: Georges Maciunas, Shadrach Woods and Joachim Pfeufer. Their practices, considered together, form what in this article I coin "*fluxarchitecture*".

Keywords

Fluxus, Architecture, Urbanism, Woods, Pfeufer, Maciunas.

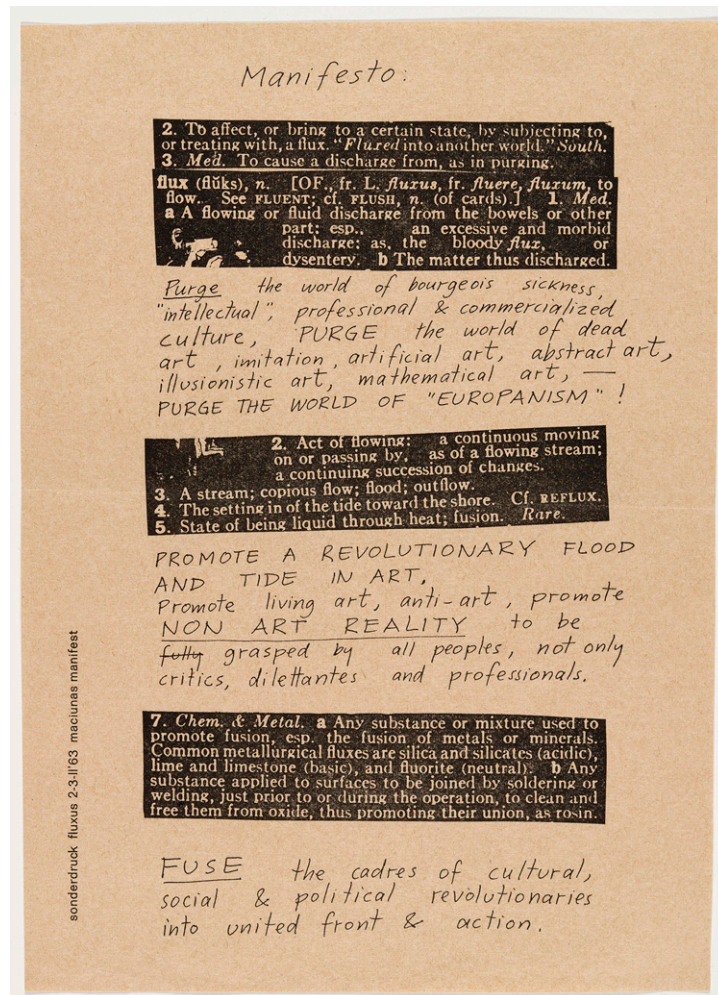
Resumen

Fluxus, un movimiento artístico que surgió en 1960, atravesó fronteras dentro de las artes. Pronto se expandió e incluyó escultura, poesía, performance, fotografía y cine, adquiriendo un carácter multidisciplinario que regularmente cruzaba o borraba las fronteras dentro de las artes. Sin embargo, su relación con la arquitectura es más compleja. En la década de 1960, algunos arquitectos buscaron resolver las contradicciones entre los principios de Fluxus y las presunciones de su propio campo, y exploraron las posibilidades de cambio —flux— en la práctica arquitectónica. Este artículo investigará posibles conexiones entre Fluxus y las prácticas arquitectónicas. Presta atención a tres figuras de teóricos y arquitectos: Georges Maciunas, Shadrach Woods y Joachim Pfeufer. Sus prácticas, consideradas en conjunto, forman lo que en este artículo acuño como "*fluxarchitecture*".

Palabras clave

Fluxus, arquitectura, urbanismo, Woods, Pfeufer, Maciunas.

Federica Doglio is an architect and a scholar. She is an Adjunct Professor in Urbanism at the School of Architecture of the Politecnico di Torino and she teaches Design studios at the New Academy of Fine Arts in Milan (NABA). She holds a PhD in Cultural Heritage from the School of Architecture of the Politecnico di Torino. In 2011-2012, conducting a research on Shadrach Woods ("A Team X Heritage. Shadrach Woods and the Architecture of Education between Europe and the US, 1962-1973) at Avery Drawings and Archives, she was a PhD scholar at the Columbia University in New York City. Her interests focus on the theory and criticism of contemporary architecture and urbanism over the past fifty years in Europe and the US. In 2013-14 she was awarded a research fellowship in the context of the Visiting Scholars Program at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. She has published essays and articles in, among the others, "Le Carré Bleu" and two monographs (*Paolo Soleri. Arcologie in terre marginali*, LetteraVentidue, 2013 and *Shadrach Woods. Per una Teoria Urbana*, LetteraVentidue, 2015). federica.doglio@polito.it



[Fig. 1] George Maciunas, Fluxus Manifesto, 1963. New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Stampa offset, cm 20,8 x 14,5. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Inv.: FC1080. Credit: © 2017. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Firenze.

First Episode. Reading Fluxus as a process: the architecture of a “movement” starting in 1960

Fluxus was an international “movement” which, as Jon Hendricks wrote, “challenged preconceived notions about art, the function of art, and the role of the artist in society,” promoting a *non-art*.¹ Though difficult to classify, Fluxus might be portrayed as an informal group of neo-dada artists active in many different artistic disciplines since the beginning of the 1960s.

Fluxus originated in New York in 1960. That year, George Maciunas chose the word *Fluxus* as the title of a magazine to be published by a just-forming Lithuanian cultural club in New York. When Maciunas consulted his dictionary, he found that the word “flux” not only existed as a noun, a verb, and an adjective, but that it had a total of seventeen different meanings. It was too good a word to let go when his first endeavor collapsed [fig. 1]. He thus introduced Fluxus in the AG gallery on Madison Avenue in October 1960. By the end of 1961, he had mapped out the first six issues of the magazine, which appeared in February 1962 and thereafter on a quarterly entitled Fluxus. He acted as both publisher and editor-in-chief.²

An architect by training, Maciunas planned the Fluxus group as if it were an architectural project. One of his skills was in organizing—co-ops, performances, and groups like Fluxus. Shael Shapiro in his book on Maciunas’ work in SoHo notes, “As an artist and muse, Maciunas was unique because he transformed daily life into art”.³ Indeed, Maciunas conceived Fluxus itself as a work of art —or, more specifically, an architectural project. As I will explore below, he hoped to construct an art movement that was itself a design process.⁴

1 Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex* (New York: Harry N.Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1988).
 2 From George Maciunas Foundation (<http://georgemaciunas.com>).
 3 Shael Shapiro, Roslyn Bernstein, *Illegal Living. 80 Wooster Street and the evolution of Soho* (Vilnius: Jono Meko Fondas, 2010).
 4 Christian Xatrec suggested this point of view in a discussion we had in January 2012 at Emily Harvey Foundation, New York City.

FEDERICA DOGLIO

Episodes toward a Fluxarchitecture.
The work of George Maciunas,
Shadrach Woods and Joachim Pfeufer.
Episodios hacia una Fluxarchitecture.
El trabajo de George Maciunas,
Shadrach Woods
y Joachim Pfeufer

Maciunas wholeheartedly engaged architectural practice and its debates while vehemently challenging them at every turn. After studying architecture at the renowned Cooper Union in New York City, where he graduated in 1952, Maciunas took a critical attitude to contemporary architecture, summarized best in a polemical article he wrote in 1962, in which he departed from his roots in traditional architectural education. Provocatively titled, “The Grand Frauds of Architecture: Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, Gordon Bunshaft, Frank Lloyd Wright”, he eviscerated a number of these prominent architects’ key projects, demonstrating how each had wasted resources.⁵

Fluxus, as a movement, would not have existed without Maciunas. It would not have existed without the many artists, composers, and thinkers who participated either, but Maciunas gave the movement a name and cemented the group’s identity.

In a project completed in 1966, a book made out of balsa wood titled *Fluxhouse*, Maciunas offers another view of his conception of good design as necessarily functional, efficient, and technically-driven. Itself an experimental production midway between a piece of writing and an architectural product, the *Fluxhouse* design was published with Henry Flynt in a pamphlet called “Communists must give revolutionary leadership in culture.” It argued for the importance of minimizing materials and the number of components in architecture in order to achieve maximum flexibility and durability. The pamphlet discusses prefabricated systems, referring to the American technical polymath Buckminster Fuller. *Fluxhouse* was also designed and built by Maciunas. Here again he attacked the fraud that he saw in present day architecture just as he had in his previous pamphlet and takes on ecological and ethical stance; no one, he argues, has the right to produce design that is ornamental.

These arguments for the necessity of ethical practice, time as an essential design component, and economy of materials in a society with dwindling resources resonate through Maciunas’ writing on architecture. They are also of central importance to two contemporaries of Maciunas who were firmly entrenched in the world of architecture: Shadrach Woods and Joachim Pfeufer. Woods (1923-1973), who was never formally trained as an architect, was a partner of the Paris-based architecture firm Candilis, Joscic, Woods from 1955 to 1968, and a core member of Team X, an international group of architects born from the ashes of CIAM.⁶ Pfeufer (1935) is an artist, architect, and urbanist, who collaborated both with Candilis, Joscic, and Woods’ firm and with the Fluxus artist Robert Filliou.

Both Woods and Maciunas, stressed that “The essence of urbanism is organization. This is also the essence of architecture”.⁷ From the early sixties to the early seventies Shadrach Woods developed a set of principles of organization, always *in the search of a system*.⁸ For him architecture depended on a theoretical organization, and only later became formal manifestation for a specific function. Woods opposed what he called “overdesign”,⁹ a term that recalled Maciunas’s proposals in his essay “Communists must give revolutionary leadership in culture”.

All three of these figures insisted on the importance of engaging, through their art production, with the era’s looming sociopolitical concerns about poverty, power imbalances, and the plight of the common man. Maciunas was the most explicitly engaged with such matters among these three figures, having proposed for Fluxus vast projects for popular outreach that targeted not just the art world but the general populace. Indeed, just as Fluxus was finding its direction, Maciunas, in a 1963 letter to a friend and collaborator, described this social mission as essential to the Fluxus project, writing, “...Our activities lose all significance if divorced from the socio-political struggle going on. We must *coordinate* our activities or we

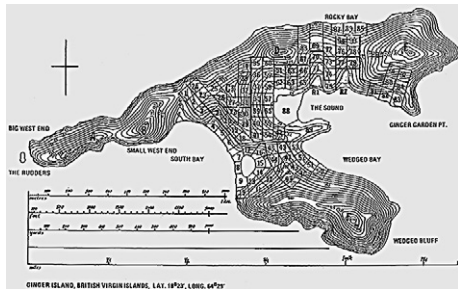
5 Thomas Kellein, *The Dream of Fluxus. Georges Maciunas: an artist's biography*, (London-Bangkok: Hansjörg Mayer, 2007).

6 Team X (1953-1981). Among the ‘core group’ there were: the English Alison and Peter Smithson, the Dutch Aldo Van Eyck and Jaap Bakema, the Italian Giancarlo De Carlo, the French Georges Candilis, the American Shadrach Woods. They met regularly (once a year or twice a year) from 1953 to 1981. The inner circle became a bigger family during some meetings. Each meeting had a subject, and all the members came to discuss projects about this topic.

7 Shadrach Woods, “What U can Do”, *Architecture at Rice*, n.27, 1972.

8 Gabriel Feld, “Shadrach Woods and the Architecture of Everyday Urbanism”. In *Time-Saver Standards for Urban Design*, eds. Donald Watson, Alan Plattus and Robert Shibley (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003).

9 “I really feel I must decline/To clutter the streets with overdesign” is part of a poem (the incipit) written by Shadrach Woods in 1973.



[Fig. 2] George Maciunas, *Ginger Island Masp*, 1969, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxux Collection Gift. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

shall become another 'new wave,' another dada club, coming and going."¹⁰ This social and political orientation took innovative form in many of the group's projects. Similarly, in his most relevant publication, *The Man on the Street*, Woods quotes his master Le Corbusier: "You are not drawing-board artists, you are organizers", and Woods continues, asserting, "We exist to organize the physical environment in ways that work – if possible sweetly, if not, at least well. We work within economic (sometimes financial) and social (sometimes political) constraints".¹¹

Fluxus sought an art that could be grasped by all people. Among the many socially-engaged architects of the period, both Woods and Pfeufer offer up a populism that is strikingly similar to that embraced by Maciunas. Woods' and Pfeufer's book, *Urbanism is Everybody's Business*, makes this argument in its title. The text goes on to explain, in a section titled "What Urbanism Can Do," that "Society cannot cast off all of its responsibility in this matter simply because the architect-urbanist exists and is willing and foolish enough to why to try to shoulder them alone. Urbanism is everybody's business and design, urban or architectural, is not a mysterious, magical activity to be entrusted blindly to the high priests of the form".¹²

Similar ideas also underlie to Maciunas's architectural and urban designs. For example, in 1969, he submitted a proposal for the urban development of one of the British Virgin Islands, Ginger Island, in which he proposed creating a grid plan (very similar to Manhattan's) on the island, which he wanted to purchase and transform into an artists' colony [fig. 2]. He proposed dividing the island into separate land parcels and building pre-fabricated *Fluxhouses* on each. Before realizing the plan, he traveled to the island with some friends, artists Milan Knizák, Yoshi Wada, and actor Robert De Niro, to explore the place. The trip turned out to be rather traumatic: after contracting a tropical disease, all the visitors suffered from temporary blindness and swollen limbs; not surprisingly, the artists' colony was never established there. The idea of the artists' colony did not die with the Ginger Island project, however; Maciunas tried to establish one along the *Fluxhouse* model in SoHo in Manhattan for example. As the curator Liutaurias Psibilskis has noted, this project began to cross the usually distinct line that divides polemical, theoretical offerings from built project.¹³

10 From a letter by George Maciunas to Emmett Williams, June 1963. Getty Center. Published in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, op.cit.

11 Woods, Shadrach, *The man in the Street*, (Penguin, 1975). The volume collects a series of Woods' writings, mainly on urbanism. It was published posthumously in 1975, edited by Alexander Tzonis.

12 "Urbanism is Everybody's Business" is also the trilingual catalog (German, English, Italian) for Woods'/Pfeufer's installation for the XIV Triennale in Milan in 1968.

13 Liutaurias Psibilskis on the "Ginger Island Project" - Interview, published on Performa 11 website (<http://11.performa-arts.org/>).

14 Like other Team X members, they had been invited by Giancarlo De Carlo.

15 Joachim Pfeufer (1972): "The Poipoidrom is the functional relation of thinking, activity, and communication. A chair, a work-bench, or an open mind can be a minimal Poipoidrom. The combination of a great number of minimums is not simply many chairs or many work-benches – a great calm. The Poipoidrom is an expression of this. And it is, at the same time, the matrix of two different routes:

From to conception of architecture itself as a process, to Ginger Island, to SoHo and the Triennale in Milan, in the following episodes, the encounter between Fluxus and the world of architecture, and perhaps urbanism, was under construction, linking different points, projects and figures that seemed isolated.

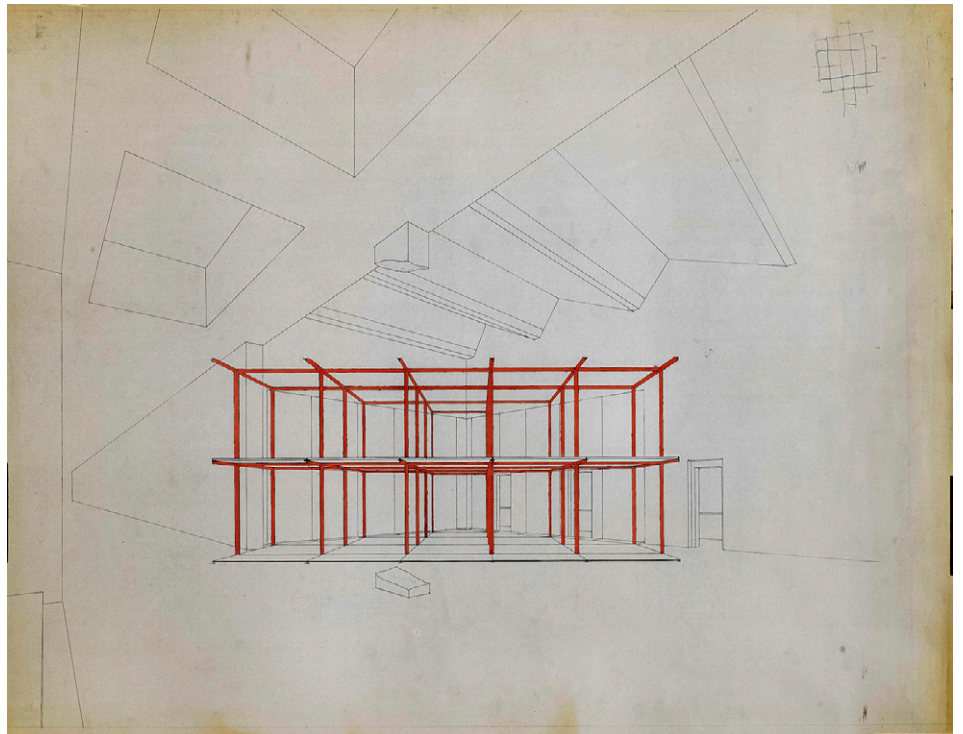
Second episode. The experience of the XIV Triennale in Milan, 1968

While the threads that connected the Fluxus movement and the Woods-Pfeufer circle were typically tenuous, indistinct, and difficult to surmise, these two milieu come together with particular clarity at the 1968 Milan Triennale. That year the Triennale, with the apropos theme of the "Great Number", was shut down by a group of students who, following the wave of the revolts coming from the west, occupied the place. There inside, among the installations of famous and talented artists, architects, and urbanists, were some connections weaving the web between Fluxus and architecture: *fluxarchitecture* indeed. Joachim Pfeufer and Shadrach Woods¹⁴ were responsible for the installation of "Urbanism is everybody's business," a gridded structure inspired by Le Corbusier's Modulor, and by Filliou and Pfeufer's Poipoidrom [fig. 3].¹⁵ With Joachim Pfeufer's involvement, the exhibit directly linked the ideas of Fluxus to the Team X movement, described by one of its founders as "a group of architects who have sought each other out because each has found the help to the others necessary to the development and understanding

FEDERICA DOGLIO

Episodes toward a Fluxarchitecture.
 The work of George Maciunas,
 Shadrach Woods and Joachim Pfeufer
 Episodios hacia una Fluxarchitecture.
 El trabajo de George Maciunas,
 Shadrach Woods
 y Joachim Pfeufer

[Fig. 3] XIV Triennale, Milan. 1968. Woods' and Pfeufer's red steel structure. Courtesy Shadrach Woods Collection, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.



of their own individual work. But is more than that. [...] In this sense Team X is Utopian, but Utopian about the present. Thus their aim is not to theorize but to build, for only through construction can a Utopia of the present be realized".¹⁶

Among the different installations erected at the Milan Triennale, the Woods/Pfeufer pavilion was one of the only to relate the issues of urban planning and design directly to political questions. Existing scholarship on the exhibit¹⁷ does not mention connections with Fluxus. Yet, these connections are readily apparent in the Woods/Pfeufer's installation and its references to the Poipoidrom. Furthermore, a close reading of the exhibit reveals that the Woods/Pfeufer's installation was connected to the work of Robert Filliou, a French-American artist linked with Fluxus movement, who left a deep theoretical impact on Pfeufer's work.¹⁸

Joachim Pfeufer met Robert Filliou in Paris during the summer of 1960. As Pfeufer recalls, "I was telling him the story about the Dogon. And that was our link, because when he came back to Paris, he talked about a couple of things he wanted to do about, what he called *poetry incorporated*". The Dogon, an ethnic group living in Mali, had attracted many European artists, architects, and scholars to their villages in the 1950s, following a 1931 anthropological study conducted by Marcel Griaule that fostered the myth of the Dogon as a people who have maintained a richly artistic, harmonious culture isolated from the influences of modernization or the western tradition. After discussing the Dogon, Filliou and Pfeufer came up with a project, the Poipoidrom indeed, which they began working on in 1963. It is a construction of 24 meters by 24 meters, 8 meters high, consisting of 9 cubes, installed in different areas that define the syntax of the space: Poipoi, the AntiPoipoi, and the Poispoi. The central cube is the Poipoidrom properly said. It is based on a poetical approach and actually formal. The project started from the concept for "the center of permanent creation," which is immediately highlighted the issue of time. What becomes evident in this project are the similarities between Woods and Filliou, who approached the design process from similar perspectives, or in Pfeufer's words, "Robert Filliou and Shadrach Woods had the same kind of head."¹⁹

The connections between the Woods/Pfeufer exhibit and Fluxus originated in 1967. These ideas arose amid discussions carried on in Villefranche-sur-Mer, a base for Fluxus artists. There, Robert Filliou and George Brecht owned a little artistic laboratory

that of activity and that of thinking - which corresponds to the different dispositions of the co-constructors, Robert Filliou and Joachim Pfeufer. The optimal Poipoidrom is an instantly realizable building of the size of 24x24 meters. What should be put inside, and how it should be built up became clear during ten years of research. The co-urbanists are now working on the designation of the building's site and they welcome any suggestions coming from anyone". From: www.artpool.hu/Fluxus/Filliou/Poipoi3e.html

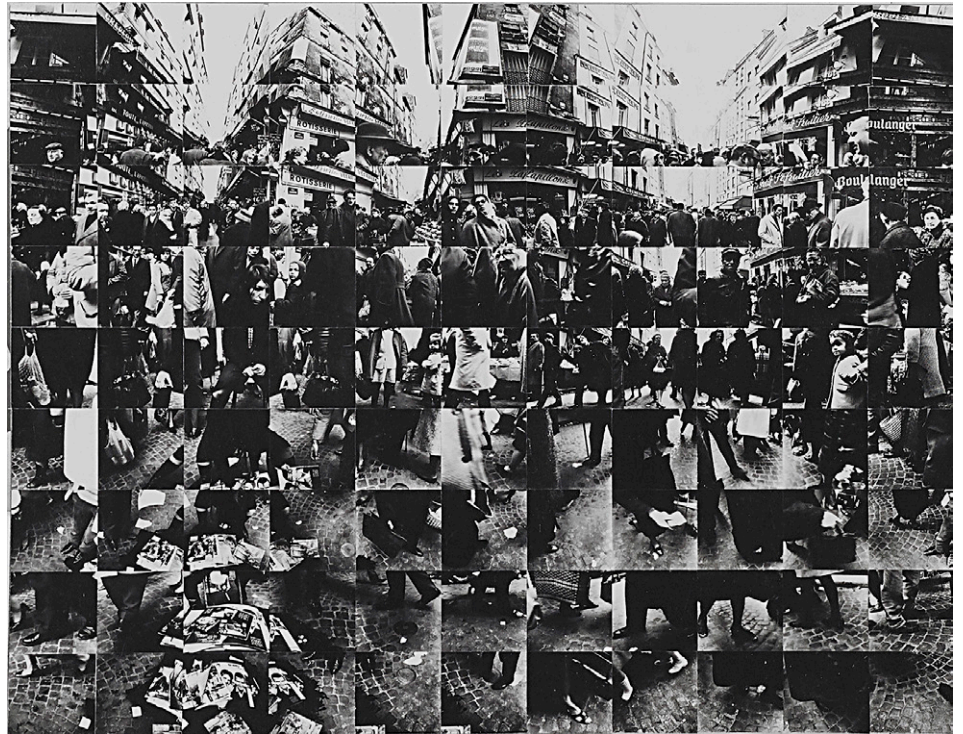
16 Ed. Alison Smithson, *TEAM 10 PRIMER* (London: Studio Vista, 1968)

17 About the XIV Triennale in Milan in 1968 the most recent publication is the Italian: Paola Nicolini, *Castelli di Carte. La XIV Triennale di Milano, 1968* (Macerata: Quodlibet Studio, 2011)

18 Some of the most remarkable of his works are: *Le Collage de l'immortelle mort du monde* (Collage of the Immortal Death of the World), 1960; *Center of Permanent Creation*, where the *Poipoidrom project* started, 1963; *République géniale* (the Republic of Genius), 1971. He wrote and published *Teaching and Learning as Performative Arts*, 1977.

19 From Joachim Pfeufer Interview with the author (Nantes, 22 March 2012).

[Fig. 4] XIV Triennale, Milan. 1968. Vera Spoe-
rri's photo collage. Courtesy Shadrach Woods
Collection, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts
Library, Columbia University.



named “La Cedille qui sourit,” where their friends and colleagues from the Fluxus circle sold various creations, such as jewelry or musical instruments. Conceived first as an English bookshop, this place was in practice a sort of workshop and shop, or maybe a *non-shop*. It was created inside of the project of the *Center for Permanent Creation*, and it lasted only for three years, from 1965 to 1968.

In addition to these personal contacts, there are explicit connections between the Wood/Pfeufer installation and the Fluxus movement: Woods and Pfeufer asked several other artists to showcase art within their installation at the XIV Triennale in Milan. Pfeufer invited three artists from Fluxus (Vera Spoe-
rri, Vassilakis Takis, and Joe Jones) to participate, and Woods brought in three others, including the Greek sculptor Costa Coule-
ntianos.²⁰ Vera Spoe-
rri, Daniel Spoe-
rri’s first wife, a professional photographer, displayed two collages [fig. 4] inside the red modular steel structure by Woods and Pfeufer, which were republished in Woods’s books on urbanism (*Urbanism is Everybody’s Business*, 1968 and *The Man in the Street*, 1975). Joe Jones,²¹ whose work treated themes of sound variation, made some triangular stringed instruments that resembled little harps [fig. 5]. Vassilakis Takis installed a piece, in which a white ball, tethered by a cable, was consistently repelled from the center by an electromagnetic field [fig. 6].

Thus, Fluxus was present in 1968 at the Triennale in Milan. These cultural and artistic links, however, have become lost to the more prominent historical story of 1968: the student occupation, which damaged the exhibit and led to its temporary closure. When the exhibit reopened, it was guarded by the police and few people visited.

Third episode. Two different ideas for SoHo. Shadrach Woods’ and Georges Maciunas’ work in Manhattan from 1967

Between 1967 and 1971, Maciunas, Woods, and Pfeufer not only lived in the same neighborhood —New York’s SoHo district— but simultaneously developed different proposals for the future of the neighborhood. Their parallel projects illustrate two different points of view and another vision of *fluxarchitecture*.

SoHo, the New York City district located immediately south of Houston Street, had been declining since the 1950s as the neighborhood’s traditional industries, such as textiles and paper waste reprocessing, became obsolete or moved out. As a

20 There is a memory about these three artists, but Woods/Pfeufer’s group could recall the name of only one of them: the Greek sculptor Costa Coule-
ntianos.

21 Joe Jones (1934 New York City - 1993 Wiesbaden). Fluxus artist focused on electronic experiments about music.

Arquitectura, mirada y cultura visual
Architecture, the Art of Looking
and Visual Culture

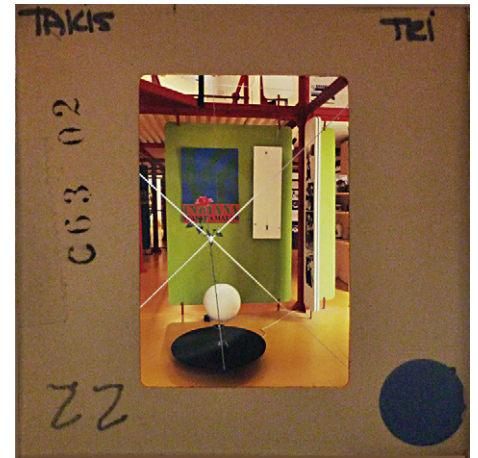
FEDERICA DOGLIO

Episodes toward a Fluxarchitecture.

The work of George Maciunas,
Shadrach Woods and Joachim Pfeufer

Episodios hacia una Fluxarchitecture.

El trabajo de George Maciunas,
Shadrach Woods
y Joachim Pfeufer



[Fig. 5] XIV Triennale, Milan. 1968. Jo Jones' stringed instruments. Courtesy Shadrach Woods Collection, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

[Fig. 6] XIV Triennale, Milan. 1968. Vassilakis Takis' installation. Courtesy Shadrach Woods Collection, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

22 In 1973 the New York City Landmark Preservation Commission declared the cast-iron district an 'Historical District', preserving these buildings from any future demolition or transformation.

23 Stem concept expressed by the author in: Shadrach Woods, "Stem", in *Architectural Design*, n.5, 1960; and in: Shadrach Woods, "Urbanism", in *Le Carré Bleu*, n.3, 1961.

24 Irene Cheng, *Shadrach Woods in New York*, doctoral colloquium, GSAPP Columbia University, spring 2006, Prof. Mary McLeod.

25 From: Charles R. Simpson, *op. cit.*: "By the end of 1966 Maciunas had picked out the first of the SoHo buildings that he was to promote as artist cooperatives, 80-82 Wooster Street, and was taking deposits from buyers of floors and half-floors. In the summer of 1967, with \$20,000 from the Kaplan Fund and the Foundation, Maciunas was able to make the cash down payment on this \$105,000 building. As was to be the pattern with other SoHo cooperatives, the former owner assumed the mortgage for the balance owed. With \$20,000 in grants, Maciunas was able to offer spaces for only \$2,000 cash down per shareholder, using the money for renovations and charging initially only \$205 per month maintenance for 3,300 square feet. By August 1967, 80 Wooster Street was fully subscribed and undergoing basic renovations, and Maciunas was lining up buyers for a second building, 16-18 Greene Street. Maciunas moved from block to block throughout SoHo, tracking down owners who were closing their businesses and anxious to sell their buildings. His method was to hold buildings with deposits, then to line up shareholders to provide the down payments. Maciunas balanced his increasingly complex financial arrangements with a continuous flow of new cash deposits. By June of 1968 he had sponsored cooperatives on Prince Street, Broome Street, and along West Broadway, a total of eleven cooperative units involving seventeen buildings".

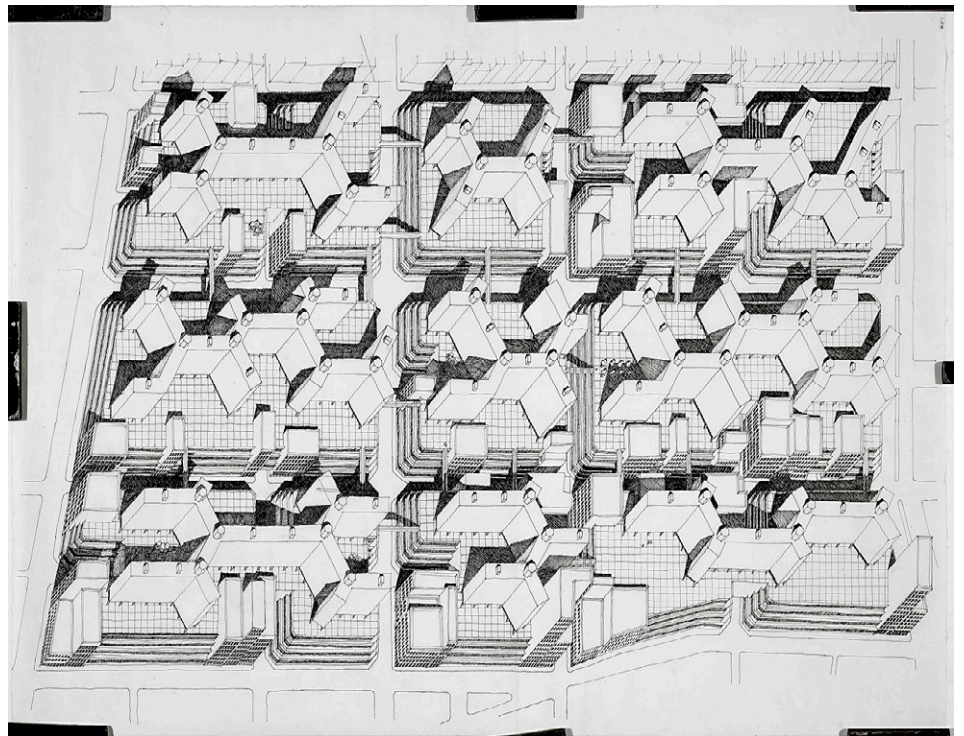
result of its manufacturing past, SoHo became at the end of the Sixties a sort of industrial slum, with its cast-iron buildings²² overlooking narrow polluted streets crowded by trucks.

In 1967 the City Planning Commission of New York City asked Woods to undertake a three month study of a manufacturing district in the vicinity of the Lower Manhattan Expressway. In 1969 Woods proposed a scheme that would have created a mixed-use urban environment, reflecting various projects that he had done in the previous decade. The superblocks connected horizontally are clear enactments of his concept of *stem*, organizing and differentiating paths for people and for cars or trucks and providing horizontal connections among the parts.²³ In its concrete details, the proposal drew on the number of major projects built in the previous decade by his firm, Candilis-Josic-Woods. Most notably, it cited the Toulouse-Le Mirail expansion of 1961, in which large housing blocks in the French city Toulouse resemble the Y pictured in the drawings of the SoHo proposal. But in SoHo, unlike the French example, Woods had to deal with the preservation of many landmarked buildings, including cast-iron ones; in his design those were restored but also renovated and absorbed into superblocks, denying partially the historical configuration of the neighborhood [fig. 7]. As Irene Cheng explains, "The superblocks would be surmounted by four-story high plinths containing spaces for light industry, connected via bridges. [...] On top of the industrial base Woods added a superstructure of residential buildings, organized around a continuous circulation system."²⁴

At the same time that Woods and Pfeufer were drawing their visions of SoHo, Maciunas was developing his own, very different, scheme for the district —known as FluxCooperatives, founded in 1967.²⁵ Maciunas drew on the popular trend among American artists to live in artist colonies in which one or two dozen artists would purchase empty land and construct studios.²⁶ Maciunas sought to combine this long established practice with the contemporary situation in which artists were living and practicing in SoHo's former factory buildings. Once again putting his exceptional organizational skills to work, Maciunas created the *FluxCooperatives*. Originally conceived of as an alternative to the capitalistic development of a part of the city, the Fluxcoops were a non-profit organization "whose purpose was to set new standards for international urban development and to provide an alternative work-live model."²⁷ Housed in the district's historical cast-iron buildings, they represented a serious attempt to overcome, quoting Shael Shapiro, the common practice in the area of "illegal living".²⁸

Maciunas realized his plan in 1967. He purchased a building at 80 Wooster Street from the Miller Paper Company, which had occupied it for the previous thirty-five years, and established Flux Cooperative II. Richard Kostelanetz, an

[Fig. 7] Shadrach Woods' project for Lower Manhattan Manufacturing District, 1969. Courtesy Shadrach Woods Collection, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.



artist of SoHo's colony, describes the process, begun in 1967, to establish the Coops: "Maciunas went from block to block throughout SoHo, tracking down owners who were closing their businesses and anxious to sell their buildings. His method was to hold buildings with deposits, then to line up the shareholders to provide down payment. Maciunas balanced his increasingly complex financial arrangements with a continuous flow of new cash deposits." By June 1968, he had secured buildings for additional coops on Prince Street, Boome Street, and West Broadway [fig. 8].²⁹

Maciunas became preoccupied with the idea of artist cooperatives as a vehicle for the emancipation of artists. Beyond residences and studios, Maciunas hoped to establish collective workshops, food-buying cooperatives, and theaters to link the strengths of various media together in an effort to bridge the gaps between the art community and the surrounding society.³⁰ He managed this, in large part, single-handedly. As a leader of this Fluxus movement, he established himself as the president of *Fluxhouse Cooperatives, Inc.*, in order to "perform all the organizational work" involved in "forming cooperatives, purchasing buildings, obtaining mortgages, obtaining legal and architectural services, conducting work as a general contractor for all renovation and [handling the] future management if so desired by the members".³¹

Although Maciunas and the Woods/Pfeufer pair knew one another, they seem to have not encountered one another, even once, during the three years that they all overlapped in New York and proposed new futures for SoHo, unaware, even, of one another's similar schemes for the future of the neighborhood.³² The missed connection illustrates the limits of these two circles' often profound overlap, and it provokes questions, *what ifs* of a history that sought an international network, but often proved hopelessly insular.

Although our three characters did not manage to meet during this time to confront their different visions, the missed connection suggests a possible alternate course of development that the district, and the city as a whole, could have taken. In this future-past, an urban-artistic operation driven by the combined visions of Woods and Macunias takes the form of *fluxarchitecture*.

26 Richard Kostelanetz, *SoHo. The Rise and the Fall of an Artists' Colony* (New York – Abindon: Routledge, 2003). The author dedicates this book to: "To the memory of George Maciunas, our founder".

27 Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, *Anything can substitute art: Maciunas in SoHo*, introduction to the exhibition at Cooper Union (Dec 11- Feb 2, 2012-2013), New York City.

28 Shael Shapiro, Roslyn Bernstein, *Illegal Living. 80 Wooster Street and the evolution of Soho*: cit.

29 Richard Kostelanetz, *SoHo. The Rise and the Fall of an Artists' Colony*, cit.

30 From <http://georgemaciunas.com>

31 Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo. The Artist in the City* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) pp. 153-188.

32 From these three characters only Joachim Pfeufer survives, and confirms that they never met in Soho in the end of the Sixties.



[Fig. 8] George Maciunas, Share certificate of the Fluxhouse Cooperative, inc., 1968, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Fourth episode, toward an epilogue. Fluxus, Team X and the Dogon

In lieu of a conclusion, we might end with a question that remains open: in what ways did Team X and Fluxus influence one another? Probing this question helps us to evaluate the theoretical foundations of a *Fluxarchitecture*, connecting this fourth episode to the previous ones, from Fluxus roots, to the experience of the Triennale in Milan, to the work, especially the theoretical one, of Shadrach Woods, a core member of the Team X.

Members of both Team X and Fluxus did not belong to a proper, self-defined avant-garde. Instead, these two international groups appeared to be informal, unstructured and without a real manifesto.³³ They were, in effect, movements of a generation pursuing an art (but also architecture and urbanism) of change, because of the cultural context they lived in,³⁴ Team X was not as radical as Fluxus, but it shared certain creative process—both groups wanted to fight against a preconceived system, to eke out different ways of thinking about a contemporary world, and to act ethically with scarce resources.

Furthermore, both Team X and Fluxus focused on process. During post-war reconstruction, the Team X family stressed the importance of program and conceptual approach in the design process treating form as largely an afterthought. Similarly, Fluxus, worked to enact principles of collectivity, change in multiple arenas, resulting in products and institutions that would seem on their faces to have no resemblance to one another; however, each was a performance of the same principles —the same strategies— that found differentiation through the diverse circumstances in which they were enacted.

To stress on the importance of a theoretical approach into these possible connections, we might remember another key moment into this investigation. There is a link between a Team X member and the Dogon (who were, as we mentioned before, the origin of the experience of the Poipoidrom). This is the case of the Dutch architect Aldo Van Eyck. In March 1951 Aldo and Hannie Van Eyck with some friends (Jan Rietveld, Lex Metz, Louis van Roode, Ben Deurne, Herman Haan and his wife) set off southwards from Amsterdam, stopping in Marseilles, boarding at the boat for Algiers, and then driving for over 4000 kilometers through the desert. This was not the only voyage Van Eyck made to Africa, he went there quite regularly after 1951, and his impressions on his multiple visits were published in *Forum*, the magazine in which he published regularly from 1953 to 1963. Some years later Aldo Van Eyck went to Dogon's villages with the two anthropologists Paul Parin and Fritz Mongenthaler, and the experience represents a fundamental step in the way Van Eyck came to formulate his architecture. Unity and diversity, complexity and simplicity are all qualities of the Dogon's villages. The notion house as an anthropomorphic structure is something that he derives from their culture. In his continued search for the elementary principles of architecture, from 1960 Van Eyck went to French Sudan.

This connection between Team X and Fluxus through the experience of the Dogon became more clear in one of our episodes, the XIV Triennale in Milan in 1968. Aldo Van Eyck brought the Dogon topic to that event in an installation entitled "Morn also for all butterflies", showing in plan a sort of labyrinth studded with broken mirrors, trees and images of the Dogon villages, in the intent of reminding us the vulnerability of certain urban scenes.

The Dogon were also the link between two key figures of this investigation: Robert Filliou and Joachim Pfeufer, who recalls, "The most important thing for me there was to meet the archeologist Herman Haan. He told me about the Dogon. In that

33 They each had a manifesto, Dorn Manifesto (1954) for the Team X, and Fluxus Manifesto (1963) for Maciunas's group.

34 In Joachim Pfeufer's words: "What happens in history in general, there are high points, and low points, and things run down and get together, and afterwards you say this is Fluxus lake, and that's Team X pond. But if you look at them in detail, they are the same thing. This is a drop of water going into different directions. But at the same time they don't lose the interconnection... that's how I look at them, that's maybe my own benefit, because I could say: meeting Shadrach Woods and Robert Filliou has an importance, but they met because of me". From: interview with the author (Nantes, 22nd March 2012).

meeting he told me about the system of meanings where the word POIPOI comes from. Herman really impressed me as an architect.”³⁵ From that system of meanings the forty years experience of the POIPOldrom takes inspiration.

Very diverse scenarios, from Mali to Milan, from Villefranche-sur-mer to New York City show the fleeting but intense connections towards a possible *fluxarchitecture*. These are precious moments of contamination between the arts in the process of creation.

Bibliography

Avermaete, Tom. 2005. *Another Modern. Postwar Architecture and Urbanism of Candilis-Josic-Woods*. Rotterdam: NAI Publishers.

Brecht, George and Filliou, Robert. 1967. *Games at the Cedilla, or the Cedilla takes off*. New York-Toronto-Frankfurt am Main: Something Else Press.

Feld, Gabriel. 2003. Shadrach Woods and the Architecture of Everyday Urbanism. In *Time-Saver Standards for Urban Design*, eds. Donald Watson Alan Plattus and Robert Shibley. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Filliou, Robert. 1997. *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*. Koeln-New York: Verlag Gebr. Koenig.

Higgings, Dick and Vostell, Wolf. 1969. *Fantastic Architecture*. New York-Toronto-Frankfurt-am-Main: Something Else Press.

Kellein, Thomas. 2007. *The Dream of Fluxus. Georges Maciunas: an artist's biography*. London-Bangkok: Hansjörg Mayer.

Hendricks, Jon. 1988. *Fluxus Codex*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers.

Kostelanetz, Richard. 2003. SoHo. *The Rise and the Fall of an Artists' Colony*. New York – Abindon: Routledge.

Pica, Agnoldomenico. 1968. *Quattordicesima Triennale di Milano. Esposizione internazionale delle arti decorative e industriali moderne e dell'architettura moderna*, exhibit catalogue (Palazzo dell'Arte al Parco, 30 maggio-28 luglio 1968, Milano). Firenze: Sole World.

Risselada, Max and Van Den Hauvel, Dirk (Eds.). 2005. *TEAM 10. 1953-1981. In search of a utopia of the present*. Rotterdam: Nai.

Shapiro, Shael and Bernstein, Roslyn. 2010. *Illegal Living. 80 Wooster Street and the evolution of Soho*. Vilnius: Jono Meko Fondas.

Smithson, Alison (ed.). 1968. *TEAM 10 Primer*. London: Studio Vista.

Smithson, Alison (ed.). 1991. *TEAM 10 Meetings: 1953-1984*. New York: Rizzoli.

Woods, Shadrach and Pfeufer Joachim. 1968. *Urbanism is Everybody's Business*. Stuttgart: Karl Kramer Verlag.

Woods, Shadrach. 1972. *What U can Do. Architecture at Rice 27*.