

## Monoskop

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Monoskop describes itself as, “a wiki for collaborative studies of the arts, media and humanities.” More specifically, it is a resource for those interested in the arts (in the broadest sense) of the last 160 or so years. However, the scope is actually much narrower. Users will not be able to find anything on more traditional artists like Edward Hopper or movements like the Ashcan School, but there is plenty

related to Bauhaus, Eli Lissitzky, sound art, and other avant-garde artists and practices.

Wikis are inherently fallible things. Monoskop is no different. While scrolling through Monoskop's timeline of artistic styles from the 1860s to the present, the author came across an image in the entry for Post Sense Sensibility by the artist Sun Yuan. The caption included a link to the artist page, but the link led to the dreaded 404 message: “The page cannot be displayed.” However, wikis are also inherently improvable. It is simple to create an account on Monoskop, which means users can easily replace the dead link with one that led to Sun Yuan's Wikipedia page. And this, of course, is the beauty of wikis: while they can sometimes lead to a dead link or a false bit of information, users ultimately have the power to correct and refine these resources, collectively enriching these ever-evolving information ecosystems.

The quality of what users can discover on Monoskop varies considerably. Were a user to search for the artist Fernand Khnopff for instance, users find a two-sentence biography, two citations to works about the artist, and four links, one of which was added by the reviewer. Since the three links originally discovered on the site included one to the French Wikipedia, a link to the extensive English Wikipedia entry was added as well. But this then begs the questions: What exactly distinguishes this arts-centric wiki from Wikipedia itself? Clearly it has a narrower focus,

but if one cannot be certain of finding richer art-related resources on Monoskop than Wikipedia, what is the draw? There are not satisfactory answers to either of these questions.

While its search bar produces the expected results, very often the content of the results is less impressive than other freely available resources. The site's sidebar did, on the other hand, provide links to pages with more substantial resources, like its "Features" tab, which provides a list of Monoskop's "best articles." For instance, Fluxus offers a page with extensive information on artists associated with the movement, works, catalogs, exhibitions, literature, and more. This can all be quite useful, though it is not necessarily better than the Fluxus Wikipedia page (as a point of comparison, Monoskop's "literature" section includes twenty-six citations whereas Wikipedia's "selected bibliography" includes thirty-five).

The screenshot shows the Monoskop Fluxus page. At the top, there is a search bar and links for 'Create account' and 'Log in'. Below the search bar, the page title 'Fluxus' is displayed with navigation options: 'Read', 'Edit', 'Page', and 'Discussion'. A 'Contents [hide]' section lists various categories: Artists, Works, Objects, artists' books, Event scores, Writings, Film, video, Sound, Graphic design, Catalogues, Exhibitions, events, Chronologies, diagrams, Collections and archives, Literature (with sub-item 'Art history and theory'), Memoirs, Lists and bibliographies, Resources, and See also. Below the contents, an 'Artists' section lists: Eric Andersen, Albert M. Fine, George Maciunas, and Yasunao Tone, with an 'edit' link.

This is not to dismiss Monoskop as irrelevant. With patience and a willingness to learn how to navigate the site, one can discover useful resources on the arts since the 1860s. That said, it would be great to see websites like this join forces with larger resources like Wikipedia to share (and avoid duplicating) information. Perhaps there could be an API developed that would allow information on artists, for instance, to be brought in from Wikipedia to Monoskop, and then the Monoskop community could leverage the expertise from its uniquely arts-focused user community to enrich these articles. While it is fantastic to have a wiki dedicated exclusively to art, it just seems like a waste not to work with other similar resources as a way to build a truly robust arts wiki.