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THE ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE: An International Fluxus Hub in the Rhineland

In May 1968, special needs teacher Erik Andersch met Dorothy Iannone and Daniel Spoerri in Düsseldorf. As a result of this encounter, Erik Andersch and his wife Dorothee formed numerous friendships with artists from the international Fluxus milieu as well as those from the Rhineland scene of the time. On the shores of the Rhine and Ruhr, a network emerged, connected by a broadly conceived idea of Fluxus, whose members included George Brecht, Robert and Marianne Filliou, Takako Saito, André and Eva Thomkins, and Hermann and Marietta Braun. The artists and their supporters lived and worked in close contact, occasionally reviving the concepts and thoughts from the Fluxus network of the early 1960s. In this milieu of friends, Erik Andersch began collecting the most recent Fluxus works and materials as well as retrospectively acquiring older Fluxus materials and objects. Against this backdrop, his diverse collection grew over the years and today includes contributions by more than 50 different artists.

In 2017, Andersch decided to donate his collection to the Museum Abteiberg, where the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE now supplements the permanent collection with well-founded first-hand historical accounts as well as filling in numerous gaps in the inventory, especially in the area of the works of women artists, such as Dorothy Iannone, Alison Knowles and Takako Saito. Though women artists were often overlooked by public institutions, private patrons like Erik Andersch took note of them at the very outset of their collecting activities and included women's works in their holdings.

One focus of the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE is the oeuvre of Takako Saito. From 1964 onwards, Saito increasingly took part in Fluxus events in New York, assisted George Maciunas in the production of various multiples and, at his suggestion, developed her first chess pieces, using repurposed objects. After her visa expired, Saito went to Europe, where she stayed in the student dormitory run by Erik Andersch and also became a regular guest at the Andersch family home.

Takako Saito continued her work on the chess format in Europe and adapted it in a variety of ways.

By defamiliarising the standard game pieces and integrating sensory perception, Takako Saito's objects stimulate the players' own creativity. Just as Fluxus intended to dissolve the rigid distinctions of art-historical genres in hopes of modifying existing social, political and societal structures, Takako Saito's playful creations break down strict rules and hierarchical ways of thinking. The game is both an art object and a communal action in which everyone can participate.