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The Tropics in the CRT Screen: 'Global Groove' to 'Vaporwave'

In surveys of twentieth-century art, Fluxus' heterogeneous and global nature has long been emphasised. The group is unique in both the nomadic, globetrotting nature of its key practitioners and the centrality of the concept of the network to the movements' aesthetics. Fluxus is thus particularly important critical terrain for scholars and curators interested in uncovering counterhegemonic and anti-colonial strategies.

How was Fluxus' transnational identity – particularly with regard to Asian spiritual traditions and global indigeneity – reflected in the formal content of its artworks? Scholars have long focussed their attention on the importance of Zen philosophy on Fluxus art theory, yet comparatively little

regard has been paid to how ideas of 'the Orient' or 'the East' were formally manifested in the production of the works themselves and how those formal elements functioned ideologically: both in non-programmatic music as well as in early examples of digital art. I will explore this topic through both interrogation and analysis of the primary source music of the 'Fourth World Music' pioneered by Jon Hassell, La Monte Young and the broadcasted video work of Nam June Paik. I contend that this aesthetic proffered a utopian vision through a dialectic between atavism and futurism. Importantly, in making this point, I will compare Fluxus with the nineteenth-century pan-European Orientalist art movement. Needless to say, Fluxus and Orientalism are widely divergent in both the media employed and the critical perspective that informs their respective aesthetics and ideologies. However, both movements shared a belief in looking globally to broader geographical contexts that offered the promise of transcending a stultifying cultural environment.

Fluxus shows that this liberatory promise cannot simply be relegated to a logic of subjugation, othering and exploitation. The presentation will also conclude with an analysis of contemporary movements that are carrying forward Fluxus' aesthetic aims: including, but not limited to, net art and vaporwave.

