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Fluxus Editions: Between Collective Authorship and Global Exchange

Fluxus saw itself as a globally active network that aimed to create new, collective forms of life. Its founder, George Maciunas (1931–1978), not only conceived and organised the group's artistic activities but also designed and published numerous Fluxus editions. His goal was to democratise the art world. For him, most of the conventional institutions, in the form of museums, theatres and concert halls, were to be abolished and works of art were to be produced serially and cheaply, while protected by copyright. In the late 1950s, Maciunas was already working as a graphic designer and had set up a workshop in his flat. In 1961, he began designing Fluxus products himself. Starting with business cards, every design had to be produced as cheaply as possible. In 1962, he founded Fluxus Editions, an ambitious publishing programme that sought to produce affordable multi-part publications and multiples that would bring revolutionary art into everyday life and popularise the group's experimental ideas on an international level. Numerous Fluxus editions were produced, including collective anthologies, yearbooks and works by individual artists, which were often designed for easy shipping. The editions reflect a playful interdisciplinary approach. Maciunas would solicit concepts from artists for Fluxus Editions. He would then often design the products himself, unifying their appearance. Fluxus Editions held the focus on simplicity in design and execution as well as the accompanying conceptual exploration of words and gestures essential to the actions. In addition to collective authorship, the tension between material and concept was thus paramount. Through graphics and texts, many Fluxus editions proposed actions or ideas that were intended to be actively used. The objects, which were mostly housed in small boxes, circulated among artists across the world, catalysing the discourse on experimental practices.