

Activating Fluxus: In and Out of the Archive

PUBLIC PANEL

Fondazione Bonotto & SNSF Activating Fluxus

Colceresa, Italy and online

5 May 2023, 10:00AM-18:00PM CEST

This event brings together experts to engage with the notion of the archive and consider the archival space as a potential site for activating works created since the 1960s, with a particular focus on Fluxus.



**FONDAZIONE
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**Swiss National
Science Foundation**

Schedule in brief

* Each time slot will consist of a 20 minute presentation followed by 10 minutes of conversation

Morning Session

- 10:00-10:30 Patrizio Peterlini and Hanna Hölling:
Welcome and Introductions
- 10:30-11:00 Patrizio Peterlini:
Intermedia Chart and Other Re-activating Stories
- 11:00-11:30 Aga Wielocha and Josephine Ellis:
Activating the Archive
- 11:30-12:00 Hubertus von Amelunxen:
'In the Name' – Concept of an Exhibition
- 12:00-12:30 Laura Montanari and Alessandro Gazzotti:
Long Live Fluxus
- 12:30-14:00 LUNCH BREAK

Afternoon Session

- 14:00-14:30 Lionel Bovier:
Ecart Archives at MAMCO, Geneva
- 14:30-15:00 Elke Gruhn:
„Bla-bla-bla“: Quoting Benjamin Patterson and other
Fluxus Ideas
- 15:00-15:30 Elke Allgaier:
60 Years of Fluxarchive Sohm
- 15:30-16:30 CONFERENCE BREAK
- 16:30-18:00 Panel discussion with the panelists
and a Q&A open to the audience

About

The activities of Fluxus (from the Latin word meaning 'flow') fluctuated across a dense international network of artists in the 1960s-70s. Indicating a state of mind rather than an art movement, Fluxus is inherently difficult to define - in this vein, the creative outputs of Fluxus reject any stable, material form. As something transitory, ephemeral or imagined, at times based on foodstuffs, organic debris, actions or three-dimensional notation, Fluxus artworks continue to complicate the concept of a timeless art that is supposedly created to last forever. The identities of Fluxus artworks thus cannot be attributed to any one physical manifestation but materialize processually through an open totality of indeterminate forms and relations.

Caring for the legacy of Fluxus, therefore, not only requires accepting change as integral to the ongoing life of Fluxus artworks but also as a positive value: an invitation to creatively engage with the porosity of a given work's boundaries. As a result, while historical iterations of Fluxus works from the 1960s-70s can be safeguarded as important documents of the recent past, our project aims to explore different modalities for engaging with the Fluxus spirit, beyond questions of physical preservation and towards the more imaginative horizon of activation.

Activation, loosely conceived, suggests creative engagement with Fluxus works using methods such as reconstruction, adaptation and artistic reinterpretation of Fluxus forms. Through this proposition to activate - not just preserve - Fluxus, the notion of the archive sheds its traditional function as a historical repository that contextualizes works of art. Instead, the archive is foregrounded as integral to present constructions of Fluxus works, comprising and comprised of artistic materials that can transform what the meaning of a work is and might potentially be.

Taking Dick Higgins' *Intermedia Chart* (1995) as a starting point for our discussion, this panel will critically explore activation as a mode of continuing and caring for the Fluxus legacy. Drawn up during a conversation with Luigi Bonotto on January 19, 1995, Higgins' chart is a graphic depiction of his 'intermedia' concept that describes artworks that fall in-between artistic media and trouble the boundaries between art and life. For almost three decades, the Fondazione Bonotto has invited artists - including Julien Blaine, Philip Corner and Mieko Shiomi - to adapt Higgins' original chart according to their own understandings of intermedia. These creative interventions serve as an apt example of activation, in which change offers a rich modality for continuity and also allows for conceptual evolution.

The following questions will be raised: What role does the archive play in the activation of Fluxus historical works? How might the archive be used to effect change, and not only stabilize, such works? What relations, amongst archivists, curators and conservators, are required to sustain the life of Fluxus? Who decides what constitutes the legacy of Fluxus works? Who is this legacy for? And fundamentally, what does it mean to activate Fluxus?

Our exploration of the potentials and challenges for activating Fluxus will contribute to the design of an "Activation Toolkit" for Fluxus archives and collections. This toolkit will aim to inspire current and future stewards of Fluxus art to creatively engage with what it means to continue the Fluxus legacy. At the same time, the notion of activation offers an opportunity to expand established approaches for conserving changeable artworks that have emerged since the 1960s.

Organisers

Activating Fluxus is a research project that started in April 2022 at the Institute of Materiality in Art and Culture, Bern University of the Arts (HKB). Funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, the project consists of an interdisciplinary team of researchers, including Prof. Dr. Hanna B Hölling (project lead), Dr. Aga Wielocha (postdoctoral fellow), Josephine Ellis (doctoral candidate), Marcus Gossolt (artistic collaborator), and a network of associated researchers: Johannes M. Hedinger, Sally Kawamura, Elke Gruhn, Stefanie Mathey and Émilie Parendeau. Together they are investigating the transitory international lives and afterlives of Fluxus objects, events, and ephemera created from the 1960s - 1970s, not destined for preservation.

Fondazione Bonotto was established in order to promote the Luigi Bonotto Collection which has collected, since the early 1970s to the present, numerous testimonies: works, audio documents, videos, posters, books, magazines and editions of Fluxus artists and International verbal-visual research developed from the late Fifties. Fondazione Bonotto aims to promote and develop a new way of relating between art, business and contemporary culture at an international level. These are the three main pillars around which the life, activity and success of Luigi Bonotto, the Fondazione's creator and sponsor, have developed.

Abstracts

Morning Session / 10:00AM-12:00PM

10:30-11:00 **Intermedia Chart and Other Re-activating Stories**
Patrizio Peterlini, Fondazione Bonotto

Since its establishment in 2013, Fondazione Bonotto has been committed to spreading and studying the poetics of Fluxus and Experimental Poetry (Concrete, Sound, Visual) through collaborations with Universities, Art Academies and residency programs for young artists and curators . A fundamental part of these collaborations has been the direct and active comparison with the artworks and documents preserved in the Bonotto collection which has given rise to new and surprising curatorial experiences and artistic creations. This intervention illustrates some of the most significant and interesting projects such as: the update of the "Intermedia chart", created in 1995 by Dick Higgins for his friend Luigi Bonotto; the "Roll Up" edition created with the young artists in residence at the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa (Venezia); the exhibition "Symphony of Hunger. Digesting Fluxus in four movements" created in collaboration with the School for Curatorial Studies of Venice.

Activating the Archive

11:00-11:30

Aga Wielocha and Josephine Ellis,
SNSF Activating Fluxus, Bern Academy of the Arts

In this presentation, two members of the SNSF Activating Fluxus project will share elements of their research to elucidate the notion of archival activation. Weaving together theoretical and practical perspectives, some questions they will ask include: What does it mean to activate an artwork from the archival domain, and how can this method serve as a cross-disciplinary inquiry? Is it possible to conceive of artworks, not only as an archive, but as capable of generating their own archives? The implications of these questions for museological and art historical practice, as well as concepts such as time, space and identity, will also be explored in correspondence with specific Fluxus works and their afterlives.

11:30-12:00

'In the Name' – Concept of an Exhibition

Hubertus von Amelunxen, Archivio Conz

The Archivio Conz in Berlin holds the vast collection of the Italian collector, publisher and photographer Francesco Conz (1935–2010). Since 2016 it has been in the process of cataloguing the collection. Although Fluxus is in the center of the collection equally important are the holdings of Concrete Poetry and as well Lettrism. Not to neglect is the large collection of fetishes. Hubertus von Amelunxen will present the concept of a large exhibition dedicated to the collection on the one side and reflecting on the question of language and “naming” on the other side. The exhibition entitled “In the Name” will take place at the cloister Eberbach from March till May 2024. It focuses on the spoken and written word, on sound and image and will try to contextualize the artworks with hints to Umberto Eco’s *Opera Aperta* (1962) and Jacques Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (1967).

Long Live Fluxus

12:00-12:30

Laura Montanari, Pari&Dispari and
Alessandro Gazzotti, Civic Museums of Reggio Emilia

From the 1970s, Pari&Dispari/Rosanna Chiessi have collaborated closely with Fluxus artists such as Joe Jonas, Takako Saito, Philip Corner, and many others, offering them concrete support to create works, editions and publications, and have also participated in international fairs, been involved in the construction of circuits with various avant-gardes, created multimedia performance festivals and international events, worked closely with the local community, and established the Pari&Dispari Historical Artistic Archive. In more recent years, public administrative bodies and museums have been key supporters and disseminators of the movements promoted by Pari&Dispari through exhibitions, publications and physical and virtual archives. Particularly noteworthy is the collaboration between Rosanna Chiessi/Archivio Storico Pari&Dispari and the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, both with the Civi Museums and with the Panizzi Library, with the creation of the photographic fund "Rosanna Chiessi, Archivio Storico-Artistico PARI&DISPARI." The future of Fluxus, or how it will be transformed, starts from knowledge and therefore from the dissemination of the cultural phenomenon through public and private cultural institutions using different media. The Fluxus message is also transmitted by reproducing performance events that have made the movement famous, explaining their meaning, reinterpreting them or staging projects that have never been realised. One of the main channels that can be leveraged may be music, which since the 2000s, has mainly attracted a younger generation of artists and musicians.

Afternoon Session / 10:00AM-12:00PM

Ecart Archives at MAMCO

14:00-14:30

Lionel Bovier, Musée d'Art moderne et contemporain, Genève

This presentation outlines the incorporation of the Ecart Archives into the physical space and programming of the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva (MAMCO), as a result of a research project titled "Ecart. Une archive collective, 1969-1982" (2017-2019). The project was led by HEAD-Geneva in collaboration with MAMCO, financed by the strategic fund of the HES-SO, and coordinated by Elisabeth Jobin. In addition to exhibitions, publications, and public programming, the project led to the creation of a publicly accessible space dedicated to Ecart, which was integrated into MAMCO's permanent display. This space combines archival storage, a reading room, and a space for temporary exhibitions based on the archival material and inspired by the archive's content. Ecart was an artistic collective, an independent space, and a publishing house founded in 1969 in Geneva by John M Armleder, Patrick Lucchini, and Claude Rychner. In the 1970s, Ecart became a meeting point of European and American art and one of the hubs of Fluxus-related artistic practices in Europe.

14:30-15:00 **„Bla-bla-bla“: Quoting Benjamin Patterson
and other Fluxus Ideas**
Elke Gruhn, Nassauischer Kunstverein Wiesbaden

The Fluxus festival in Wiesbaden in 1962 has been monumentalized in history as the canonical event from which Fluxus emerged. How can we experiment with both the Wiesbaden and wider Fluxus legacy more imaginatively, beyond questions of physical preservation? This presentation explores different modalities of contemporary exhibition making and considers how Fluxus ideas can be transmitted to contemporary artists through international networking via Follow Fluxus, an annual scholarship grant that supports the practice of artists whose works build on the ideas of Fluxus.

15:00-15:30 **60 Years of Fluxarchive Sohm**
Elke Allgaier, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

In 1981, Hanns Sohm, the founder of the archive, transferred his holdings, which had been collected privately over a period of about 20 years, to the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart. The Staatsgalerie thus became a hotspot for Fluxus research. But as far as especially the exploration and activation of the collection is concerned, we are facing strategic challenges today. A short workshop report will be used to discuss current case studies as well as an overview and outlook.

Speakers

Elke Allgaier is curator and Head of the Staatsgalerie's Archives Department, a research institute that holds four major archival bequests: Fluxus Archives of Hanns Sohm, Archive Oskar Schlemmer, Archive Will Grohmann and Kunsttheoretischer Nachlass Adolf Hölzel (art theoretical bequest of Adolf Hölzel). Trained in Art History, she completed an MA at Freiburg University and a PhD at Zurich University. Her research has focused on Photography in relation to Fluxus activities. She is currently curating the exhibit 'Alison Knowles. Sound and Space', on view until 9th July 2023 at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.

Hubertus von Amelunxen is a philosopher, art historian, editor, curator, critic, and professor for philosophy of photography and cultural studies. He has authored and published several books focusing on the history and theory of photography and has curated multiple international exhibitions from William Henry Fox Talbot (1989) to Cy Twombly (2012). He was the founding director of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies at the Muthesius Academy in Kiel (1995-2000), the founding director of the International School of New Media (ISNM) in Lübeck (2000-2005), the general director of The European School of the Image in Angoulême and Poitiers (2005-2010), the president of The Academy of Arts in Braunschweig (2010-2013) and served as president and provost at The European Graduate School, based in Saas-Fee, Switzerland, Venice and Valletta, Malta (2013-2019). Since 2020 he is the director of the Archivio Conz in Berlin, a vast collection of Fluxus, Lettrism and Concrete Poetry. von Amelunxen is since 2003 an elected member of the section visual arts at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

Lionel Bovier is an art historian, and since 2016, a director of MAMCO, Geneva's modern and contemporary art museum. He has previously worked as an art critic, curator and publisher, starting his career by laying the foundation of independent art space Forde, Geneva and curating exhibition in various institutions including Le Magasin in Grenoble and the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne. In 2004, he cofounded the publishing house JRP|Ringier, one of the leading international and independent publishers of books on contemporary art. He is an author and editor of numerous books and exhibition catalogues.

Josephine Ellis is the doctoral candidate in the Activated Fluxus research project, hosted by SINTA Studies in the Arts graduate program at Bern University and Bern University of the Arts. She recently obtained her MA degree in History of Art from University College London, England, where she specialized in the materiality of artworks and artefacts created in the 1960s and 70s and the visual culture of Southeast Asia during the Second British Empire.

Alessandro Gazzotti graduated from the DAMS of Bologna in history of contemporary art, specialized in Museology. Since 2009 he has been the official responsible for the care of the historical and artistic collections of the Civic Museums of Reggio Emilia. In the early 2000s, Gazzotti was a collaborator of Rosanna Chiessi (Pari&Dispari).

Elke Gruhn is director, curator, researcher and editor at the Nassauische Kunstverein Wiesbaden where she funded the Follow Fluxus Scholarship in cooperation with the state capital of Wiesbaden (2008-). Together with Valerie Cassel Oliver (CAM Houston) she curated the 2012 Ben Patterson's retrospective in Wiesbaden (Fluxus 50). In cooperation with his estate, she activated Patterson's score for documenta 13 (Athens & Kassel), and performed its further activations in Hannover (2918) and Art Institute Chicago (2019). For the recent sixtieth anniversary of the iconic FLUXUS-Festspiele Neuester Musik 2022, she initiated the exhibition series FLUXUS SEX TIES, focusing on the female artists in and around Fluxus. Gruhn studied art history in Cologne and Marburg, and obtained an MA degree in art history, anthropology and German studies. In her practical work, she focuses on experimenting with different – mainly low budget – exhibition formats for activating Fluxus.

Hanna Hölling is Research Professor at the Bern University of the Arts and Honorary Fellow at University College London. Prior to this, Hanna was an Associate Professor in the Department of History of Art, University College London and Andrew W. Mellon Professor, Cultures of Conservation, at the Bard Graduate Center, New York. Her research, teaching, and advising addresses subjects in art history and theory, media and material (culture) studies, museology, conservation, and American and European art created since the 1960s. Hölling's publications include two sole-authored monographs: *Paik's Virtual Archive: On Time, Change and Materiality in Media Art* (University of California Press, 2017) and *Revisions—Zen for Film* (Bard Graduate Center, 2015) and three edited volumes: *The Explicit Material: Inquiries on the Intersection of Curatorial and Conservation Cultures* (co-edited with F. Bewer and K. Ammann; Brill, 2019), *Object-Event-Performance: Art and Materiality since the 1960s* (Bard Graduate Center, 2021) and *Performance: The Ethics and the Politics of Conservation and Care* (co-edited with J. P. Feldman and E. Magnin; Routledge, forthcoming 2023). Hölling's other writings have appeared in peer-reviewed journals, critical anthologies, and exhibition catalogs.

Laura Montanari promotes the Pari&Dispari/Rosanna Chiessi Historical Archive through exhibitions, events, publications and the website www.pariedispari.org. The Archive is made up of contemporary works of art collected and produced by Rosanna Chiessi, created in over 50 years by artists of the main Italian and international currents, in particular of the Italian conceptual area, visual poets, Viennese Actionism, Fluxus, performance art and Gutai movement.

Patrizio Peterlini graduated in Modern Literature and Clinical Psychology, he holds a D.E.A. in Psychanalyse Concept et Clinique at the Université Paris-8. Participating member of the Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis in Italy, he is a member of the scientific committees of the Archivio Luciano Caruso (Firenze), "BAU Contenitore di cultura contemporanea" and of the Comité de Suivi de l'EUR Creates Université Côte d'Azur. From 2005 to 2010 he collaborated with the F. Conz Archive, taking care of its publications, exhibitions and cataloging of works and documents. Since 2013 he is director of Fondazione Bonotto. From 2017 to 2021 he was a permanent member of the jury of the "Prix Littéraire Bernard Heidsieck-Centre Pompidou" which he helped establish. He has curated exhibitions in important international institutions and his contributions are published in numerous art catalogs and in psychoanalysis journals. Among his publications are: "Riviste d'arte d'avanguardia. L'esoeditoria in Italia negli anni 60 e 70"; "Sarenco: le riviste, la lotta. Storia di un esploratore d'avanguardia"; "Lo squartamento estetico. La distruzione della bellezza nella Body Art"; "Fluxbooks. Fluxus Artist Books"; "Arrigo Lora Totino. La parola come poesia segno suono gesto. 1962-1982"; "Sense Sound / Sound Sense. Fluxus music, scores and records"; "Rivoluzione a parole. Poesia sperimentale internazionale dal 1946 a oggi. Manifesti e testi teorici", "Giovanni Fontana. Epigenetic Poetry" and "La voix libérée. Poésie sonore", an innovative catalog in the form of an app.

Aga Wielocha is a researcher and collection care professional specializing in contemporary art. Currently she is a postdoctoral fellow in the SNSF-funded research project Activating Fluxus in the Institute Materiality in Art and Culture, Bern Academy of the Arts. Previously, she worked as a Conservator in M+ Museum of Visual Culture in Hong Kong, where she was designing documentation strategies to support efficient care of growing collections of visual art, design, architecture and moving image. Her doctoral research, titled *Collecting archives of objects and stories: On the Lives and Futures of Contemporary Art at the Museum* carried out within the program New Approaches in the Conservation of Contemporary Art (NACCA) and situated on the intersection of art history and theory, conservation, museology and heritage studies, was focused on the lives and futures of contemporary art in institutional collections, particularly on works which are variable and unfold over time. Her general research interests lie in mechanisms and processes of institutional collecting with a focus on processual, contemporary art formats, such as art projects, participatory art and performance and she regularly lectures, gives presentations, and writes on this topic.

Contact

Activating Fluxus

activatingfluxus@gmail.com

www.activatingfluxus.com

Fondazione Bonotto

info@fondazionebonotto.org

www.fondazionebonotto.org