
BOOK REVIEWS

REFERENCE

Fluxus Experience by Hannah Higgins (Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2002. 259 pages, 57 illustrations, \$29.95 paper)

2002 was an interesting year for Fluxus. Most obviously, it was the fortieth anniversary of the Wiesbaden festival that introduced the name Fluxus to the world. Most important, it marks the appearance of the first monograph-length philosophical treatment of the Fluxus idea by a single author.

For many years, writing on Fluxus was the province of enthusiasts sharing their ideas, curators undertaking exhibitions, or journalists and art critics. While these writings were often interesting, they were often filled with historical errors, and they sometimes revealed more about the authors than they revealed about Fluxus. Fluxus also benefited from two special groups of documents. One is the astonishing series of archival documents compiled by Jon Hendricks for the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Foundation. The other is the nearly fifty years of pamphlets, catalogues, books, documents, event scores, and text-based artifacts compiled by the artists themselves. There are notable high points—including the occasional monographic exhibition catalogues and special journal issues that provided a responsible and rich variety of critical and historical views by such authors as Stephen Foster, Peter Frank, Estera Milman, or Marilyn Ravicz. Until the 1990s, however, one kind of writing was rare: serious, sympathetic, and well-informed discussions of Fluxus from a philosophical and historical view.

In the 1990s, a new generation of Fluxus scholars began to fill this gap. Hannah Higgins is a charter member of this group. Over the past decade, this group has included such scholars as Simon Anderson, Philip Auslander, Ina Blom, David Doris, Kathy O'Dell, Craig Saper, Owen Smith, Kristine Stiles, and others—notably Higgins herself—as well as newer voices, including Bertrand Clavez, Kevin Concannon, Anna Dezeuze, Stephen Perkins, and Julia Robinson.

Until now, these authors have written doctoral dissertations, book chapters and—in Smith's case—an authoritative history of Fluxus. With *Fluxus Experience*, the field moves forward to the deeper consideration of central themes and topics.

Higgins develops her theme in a pattern that moves in an elegant sweep to develop surprising conclusions from well-known (and less known) facts. She reveals the hidden depths of the subject by using apparently simple Fluxus ideas to develop an unexpected range of topics that others have overlooked.

The preface and introduction make an important point: Fluxus is experience before it is art, and it is the philosophical and experiential nature of Fluxus that has enabled it to remain a lively presence while standard art movements come and go. Notably, Higgins points to two issues. The first is philosophical, a link to John Dewey, pragmatist philosopher and educator. The second is the fact that Fluxus itself has always been an educational and philosophical venture.

Higgins's first chapter offers a re-reading of Fluxus through the topic of vision and a close reading of several works. In later chapters, close reading becomes a central strategy of this book, and Higgins examines specific works and types of work to develop central topics of investigation. She also uses philosophy and politics—in a wide sense—to good effect. Starting with several films and optical experiments, and ending with a comment on globalization and the strategy of the event as the locus of a democratic practice.

The second chapter, "Charting Fluxus: Picturing History," explores the way that Fluxus artists diagrammed themselves, and constructed their vision of the world. This leads neatly into the third chapter, a history of how Fluxus was received, and how it influenced and was ignored by other art streams of the 1960s and 19670e, including Pop Art, Conceptual Art, and Happenings. The theme of how Fluxus was received, understood, or—more often—misunderstood is continued in chapter four, "Great Expectations: A Reception Typology."

If these chapters had been the whole of this book, it would have been sufficient for a major contribution, but the real core of this book appears at the end: "Teaching and Learning as Art Forms: Toward a Fluxus-Inspired Pedagogy." This chapter focuses on Fluxus as a pedagogical encounter with the world.

After discussing the origins of Fluxus in John Cage's composition classes at the New School for Social research, she notes some of the Fluxus artists and their friends who have been deeply involved in teaching. This includes such well-known names as Joseph Beuys, Geoffrey Hendricks, Allan Kaprow, and Robert

Watts. The core of this chapter, however, is an investigation of Robert Filliou, author of a book titled "Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts."

Past writers have often neglected the important focus on learning and teaching among Fluxus artists. This book performs a great service by bringing this topic to the foreground of Fluxus activities.

While writers on Fluxus have rarely attended to this central theme, the Fluxus artists themselves have been deeply engaged. Along with the artists mentioned, there have been major pedagogical activities by several Fluxus artists. Fluxus co-founder Dick Higgins was a dedicated scholar and theorist who served as a teacher-at-large in the great tradition of peripatetic philosophers. Fluxus name-giver and organizer George Maciunas invented a learning machine and was deeply engaged in design and communication issues. Alison Knowles, another co-founder of Fluxus, has been an influential teacher to several generations of artists, a fact recognized when the College Art Association honored her with a lifetime achievement award. In the middle of the 1960s, Jeff Berner was a co-founder of the San Francisco State College Experimental College, one of the earliest such experiments in the world. I taught at SFSCEC while developing the first intermedia class to be offered under that title in a university, and I now work in knowledge management and organizational learning, directing my attention beyond the art world.

While Hannah Higgins's book brings a rich range of issues to the surface of Fluxus studies, it is worth noting that the anthropologist Marilyn Ekdahl Ravicz addressed these issues thirty years ago in the first doctoral dissertation written on Fluxus. Ravicz's work has been overlooked for two reasons, first because it ahead of its time and second because Ravicz came from outside the art world. These themes require a broad interdisciplinary perspective that is only now emerging thanks to the contributions of such scholars as Higgins and her colleagues.

Fluxus Experience is a work of serious scholarship and powerful analysis. It is marked by a number of minor flaws. There are a number of mistaken dates and several inaccurate quotes. Some of these are problematic because they reduce the power of Higgins's claims, or because they take an opposite view to that of the quoted authors. One would not care about such flaws in a lesser book. A book as good as this book is ought to perfect in all details.

This book is far more than an art history. It is philosophical investigation perfectly suited to a group of artists who were active in far more than art. Hannah Higgins offers a grand account of Fluxus in a book that

will enable mindful readers to participate reflectively in the Fluxus Experience.

— Ken Friedman

Ken Friedman is associate professor of leadership and strategic design at the Norwegian School of Management and visiting professor of art and design at Staffordshire University. Friedman has been active in Fluxus since 1966, and he edited *The Fluxus Reader*.

The International Guide to Art Fairs and Antiques Shows (New York, Artmediaco, 2003) is a twice-yearly publication to offer a guide to fairs and shows throughout the world. There is an alphabetical listing, as well as a guide to fairs and shows by place. An illustration directory (all in color) completes this well-designed necessary tool for all those interested in art who travel and are willing to keep up with what is going on. A special subscription rate for two years is only \$29.00. Send to Artmediaco Inc., 7699 Broadway, Ste. 224, New York, NY 10211-2801.

The New Media Reader, edited by Noah Wardri-Fruin and Nick Montfort (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2003, \$45.00 cloth and CD-Rom) collects texts, videos, and computer programs—many of them now almost impossible to find—that chronicle the history and form the foundation of this still-emerging field. The texts come from computer scientists, artists, architects, literary writers, interface designers, cultural critics, and individuals working across disciplines. Originally published between World War II and the emergency of the World Wide Web, the contributors include Jorge Luis Borges, Vannevar Bush, Alan Turing, Ivan Sutherland, William S. Burroughs, Ted Nelson, Italo Calvino, Marshall McLuhan, Billy Kluver, Jean Baudrillard, Nicholas Negroponte, Alan Kay, Bill Viola, Sherry Turkle, Richard Stallman, Brenda Laurel, Langdon Winner, Robert Coover, and Tim Berners-Lee.

The CD accompanying the book contains examples of early games, digital art, independent literary efforts, software created at universities, and home-computer commercial software. There is also digitized video, documenting new media programs and artwork for which no operational version exists. One of them is documentation of Lynn Hershman's *Lorna*, the first interactive video art installation. This will be a major reference and textbook for universities for years to come!

Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs by Cara A. Finnegan (Washington,

Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003, \$36.95) discusses the premises for establishing the Farm Security Administration established in the 1930s to portray an urgent, powerful reminder that "one-third of a nation" was in a real crisis and hurting. Photos by such as Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Ben Shahn and more are familiar as iconic images, but Finnegan explores here how popular magazines constructed complex, and often contradictory, messages about poverty. She finds this moment in history when visual images took center stage as the nation struggled with economic, political and social strife.

With compelling vision and insight, the author reminds us of the importance of analyzing images and the contexts in which they are to be understood. She puts them into their original contexts, giving us new meanings of images, poverty, the Depression and the various roles of the mass media at the time.

The titles of her chapters will give you an idea of what is involved: "Imaging Poverty in the Historical Section"; "Social Engineering and Photographic Resistance"; "Intersections of Art and Documentary: Aesthetic Rhetorics of Poverty in *U.S. Camera*"; "Spectacle of the Downtrodden Other: Popular Rhetorics of Poverty in *Look Magazine*". Selected bibliography and index. Important for photographic history collections and photo historians.

GENERAL

Domestic Aesthetic: Household Art 1920-1970 by Jean Bernard Hebey and photographs by Christophe Fillioux (Milan, Five Continents Editions, 2002, \$65.00) is dedicated exclusively to houseware design, the neglected area of industrial design. Coming from the Hebey collection, these mass-produced objects—sleek and anonymously uniform—have left their mark on their age through the techniques applied, the materials used, the forms invented as well as their practicality, whether real or apparent.

Beautifully photographed by Christophe Fillioux, these objects are true reflections of the period in which they were conceived, created, manufactured, promoted and sold en masse, objective expressions of our triumphs and our failures. Often forgotten or treated as "ordinary", these commonplace objects have now become collectible, known for their design elements rather than their function, and merely need to be "on display", as Warhol would use the term. The collection has over 3,000 items and this selection of the "archeology of the Modern" allows the reader to indulge in the appreciation of the commonplace, which has not been elevated to a very high level of design. A

stunning story of the hunt, as well as a marvelous presentation. Hebey's own introduction shows us about the hunt for such items and the story of the collecting instincts. Bibliography.

Ornament: A Modern Perspective by James Trilling (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2003, \$45.00 cloth) is a lucid and generously illustrated account—part visual guide, part cultural history—of ornament—"the art we add to art"—which makes people happy. This is a wide-ranging consideration of the cultural and symbolic significant of ornament, its rejection by modernism, and its subsequent reinvention. Trilling explains how ornament works, why it has to be explained, and why it matters. He discusses ornament in textiles, ceramics, metalwork, architecture, manuscripts and books, alluding to religion science, ancient and modern literature, political history, and moral philosophy.

Kara Walker: Narratives of a Negress (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, \$45.00 cloth) represents a comprehensive overview of Walker's work, beginning with her first cut-paper wall installation, *Gone, an Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred between the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart* (1994). Other highlights include the 1996 series of twenty-four watercolor drawings, *Brown Follies*, which is reproduced in full as an artist's book within the book, and installation views of many of Walker's exhibitions. Recent drawings and projections are also featured.

This handsomely designed book captures the stunning effect of Walker's black paper cutout silhouettes as she confronts stereotypes, sex, violence, and power relationships through Civil War-era parodies, narratives, and a mastery of craft and installation. For the first time, this volume has a selection of Walker's writings reproduced as they were created typed on index cards. These writings reveal a rarely seen side of the artist, whose words are as provocative as her installations and drawings. These cards are an alternative way of thinking about ideas, and recently have been included with small paintings as new works. Included is exhibition history, a selected bibliography and a kind of epilogue: "No more pretty shadows, papercuts or delicate things, that's so 90's. No more Irony, no more mercy. It is high time for anger, which precedes chaos, but which is hard to create, when there's money in the bank, and a healthy economy."

The exhibition closes on 3 June at the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore

College and goes to Williams College Museum of Art from 30 August - 5 December 2003.

Bill Viola: The Passions, edited by John Walsh (Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, \$75.00 hardcover, \$45.00 paperback) explores how slowly changing facial expressions and body language express emotional states through a series of 20 video works made by Viola during the past two years. Inspired by medieval and Renaissance devotional paintings, especially in the collection of the Getty Museum. As a consequence of a residency as a Getty Scholar during a period when the theme was "Representing the Passions", Viola began to create large projection pieces and smaller LCD and plasma flat panel displays exploring the human condition and its expansive range of emotions.

Included is a conversation between Hans Belting and Viola, sources and notes on the works by Viola, visual documentation by Kira Perov, as well as essays by Peter Sellars and John Walsh. Beautifully designed by Lorraine Wild with Stuart Smith, this book is truly gorgeous, coming as close to making the moving image work in a static situation better than any attempt thus far, except, of course, for a videotape. In addition, Perov's own documentary photographs described by Viola add a very personal and enriching addendum to an exceptional book with input by the artist and his partner. A tour de force!

The Art of Adolf Wölfli: St. Adolf-Giant-Creation by Elka Spoerri, Daniel Baumann, and Edward M. Gomez (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003, \$29.95 hardcover) is the documentation of a man diagnosed as schizophrenic at age 31, but who spent all the subsequent years until 1930 when he died achieving artistic greatness in his cell at Waldau Mental Asylum near his native Bern, Switzerland. His profound influence on modern art was cited by André Breton. This book represents the exhibition at the American Folk Art Museum which covers his life and work, includes translations of newly found writings, sets him as a major influence on artists until the present, and deals with Wölfli as a major visionary graphic designer.

With 76 color plates and 24 halftones, the artist's remarkably intricate drawings and astonishing collages celebrate this artist who blended mythology and humor into amazingly complex works of art. Bibliography and index. A must!

An Imperial Collection: Women Artists from the State Hermitage Museum, edited by Jordana Pomeroy

et al (London, National Museum of Women in the Arts in association with Merrell Publishers, 2003, \$50.00 hardcover) accompanies the exhibition at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC and is published as part of the international celebrations marking the City of St. Petersburg's 300th anniversary. The nearly 50 paintings by 15 western European women artists are from the collection of the Hermitage and the book explores how women, both as artists and patrons, contributed to the artistic development of Russia.

Included are artists such as Elisabeth Louise Vigée-Lebrun, who found refuge in St. Petersburg after the French Revolution forced her to flee her own country; French sculptor Marie-Anne Collot, whose numerous works for Catherine the Great included the monumental head for the sculpture of Peter the Great, and Angelica Kauffman, one of the few 18th-century women painters to tackle the challenging field of history painting, often with a heightened sensitivity to female roles. Selected bibliography and index.

Veil: Veiling, Representation, and Contemporary Art, edited by David A. Bailey and Gilane Tawadros (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, \$25.00 original paperback) accompanies an exhibition organized by the Institute of International Visual Arts in London, exploring the representation of the veil in contemporary visual arts. Providing a context for the commissioned essays are a number of classical historical texts crossing religions, cultures, genders, and ages—from Greek myths to articles published in the aftermath of September 11, 2001.

Some of the essayists deal autobiographically with the meaning of the veil in their lives; others take a historical approach, examining how nineteenth-century technological developments in travel and photography led to photographic depictions of both the veiled and unveiled body in relation to landscape. The fascination of Western writers, artists, and photographers with the veil reflects the voyeuristic nature of our interest in what is strange and "other." The historical discussions lead to an essay about "Poetics and Politics of Veil, Voice and Vision in Iranian Post-revolutionary Cinema. Selected writings about veils and artists' biographies.

Cai Guo-Qiang: An Arbitrary History (Milan, 5 Continents Editions for the Museum of Contemporary Art of Lyon, 2002, \$24.95 hardcover) is a bilingual monograph on a dynamic Chinese-born artist who has an international reputation for sculpture, fireworks and building bridges among cultures. Interviews, articles,

a catalog of works with personal commentary by the artist, a biography of an artist who combines political and cultural aspects into everything he does. This is a stylized, idiosyncratic monograph of an artist who is on a roll. Many color plates.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Drop of Dreams by Toshiko Okanoue (Tucson, AZ, Nazraeli Press, 2002, \$50 hardcover) is a series of 63 four-color collages which speak of a dream world, surreal at times, extension of the artist's imagination floating within her subconscious done in the 1950s, not with Photoshop but with scissors showing the perception of the Western way of life by a Japanese artist. With scissors, paste and a stack of magazines such as *Life* and *Vogue*, she cut out the photographs that "fit my dreams" and arranged them on black flocced paper. Seemingly satisfied with her medium, collage, she has fabricated her dreams in concrete form droplet by droplet. As has been described by others, these collages are "a contemporary version of Alice in Wonderland." The subconscious, working overtime, has created a timeless yet evocative portrayal of dreams of another culture, trying to possess it as she indulges in using the very symbols of that new culture in an intuitive way.

Revelation: Representations of Christ in Photography by Nissan N. Perez (London, Merrell in assoc. with The Israel Museum, 2003, \$50.00) has been published to accompany an exhibit at The Israel Museum (22 May - 6 September 2003), the first book ever to explore the exploration of Christ in photography and film.

Written by Preze, curator of photography at that museum, this book includes an outstanding group of photographs such as Paul Strand, Annie Leibovitz, Man Ray, Lewis Hine, Julia Margaret Cameron, Robert Mapplethorpe and F. H. Day, representing photographs from 1855 to the present ranging from the reverent to the provocative. Whether these were created for historical or artistic purposes, innumerable photographic images have been produced either as purely artistic expressions or self-portraits of photographers as Jesus, to the use of subtle signs and symbols, such as the attributes of Christ, that suggest his presence. There are 195 quadtone illustrations.

Adele Reinhartz adds an essay on "Jesus on the Silver Screen", in addition to a bibliography, and index.

Martín Chambi: Photographs, 1920-1950 (Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution Press,

2003, \$45.00 paper) with foreword by Mario Vargas Llosa, and introductions by Edward Ranney and Publio Lopez Mondéjar is derived from a native of the Andes, someone who lived in the Peruvian sierra, leaving some 30,000 negatives. To say he is a pioneer is an understatement, since he blossomed when he moved to Cuzco and was witness to a culture not only the streets and parks, but in towns, Indian communities, fairs, valleys, and mountains of his land. But he was not a documentarian; he was a sociologist with his camera capturing the intrigues, cruelties, tenderness and absurdities of his time. From the elegance of the upper classes to the drunkenness and poverty of the poor and then the events that bound both such as sports, dances, bullfights, and solemn rituals. He humanized and dignified his subjects by his clarity of vision and the elegance of treatment.

Almost 100 duotones record the life of Chambi's Cuzco and Peru: the solitary figure of a campesino; an open-air military banquet framed by Andean peaks; a portrait of the local men's basketball team; a community of Franciscan friars; young ladies seated in a chichería, or bar and so much more.

Americans in Kodachrome 1945-1965 by Guy Stricherz (Santa Fe, Twin Palms Publishers, 2002, \$60 hardcover) documents the first modern color film, introduced in 1935 and used extensively after World War II by amateur photographers equipped with the new high-quality and low cost 35-mm cameras. As such, this volume presents an unprecedented portrayal of the daily life of the people during these formative years of modern American culture. 95 four-color plates were chosen from many thousands of slides in hundreds of collections. There is honesty in these images as well as frankness and vigor. Not made for public consumption as much as memoirs of families and friends, these photographs reveal a free-spirited intuitive approach, oftentimes called "amateur" meaning done with love and not for money. The clarity and unpretentiousness are offered as a kind of "folk art" or truly Americana from baseball to picnics, from living room portraits to fishing, from the ladies at tea to watermelon-eating. And so much more. A gem of an album.

REPRINTS

African-American Art and Artists by Samella Lewis (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003, rev. & expanded edition) with new introduction by Mary Jane Hewitt. Bibliography and index. \$65.00 hardcover, \$29.95 paper

African Art by Frank Willett (New York, Thames & Hudson, 2003, \$16.95, 3d ed.) with additional illustrations, recent research, plus a new chapter and extended bibliography.

RECEIVED:

The Art of Tracey Emin, edited by Mandy Merck and Chris Townsend (New York, Thames & Hudson, 2002, \$24.95 paper)

Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion's Creative Dream by Johann Gottfried Herder, ed. and translated by Jason Gaiger (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002, \$18.00 paper)

Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust, edited by Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2002, \$55.00 cloth, \$24.95 paperback) a collection of critical essays that reflect on the urgency and necessity to remember from Leibeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin to Morris Louis's series of paintings *Charred Journal*, and much more. Tatana Kellner's bookworks, **50 Years of Silence** are included in the chapter on *Material Memory: Holocaust Testimony in Post-Holocaust Art*.

Shows Not to Miss

The Aztecs at the Royal Academy of Arts, London through 11 April.

The Medici, Michelangelo and the Art of Late Renaissance Florence at the Detroit Institute of Arts, from 16 March to 8 June.

Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman at the Metropolitan Museum of Art through 30 March. A complementary show of 65 works from this exhibition is being organized by the Musée du Louvre in Paris from 28 April to 7 July.

African-American Artists, 1929-1945: Prints, Drawings and Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art through 13 July.

Frederic Remington: The Color of Night at the National Gallery of Art through 13 July. Travels to Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, OK (10 August - 9 November) and the Denver Art Museum (13 December to 14 March 2004).

First Steps: Emerging Artists from Japan at P.S. 1 in Long Island City through 16 June.

Conversion to Modernism: The Early Works of Man Ray at the Montclair Art Museum in New Jersey through 3 August, then on to Georgia Museum of Art in Athens and the Terra Museum of American Art in Chicago.

Margaret Bourke-White: The Photography of Design, 1927-1936 at the Phillips Collection in Washington, through 11 May. Travels to Sarasota, FL, Charlotte, NC, Fort Wayne, IN, Portland, ME and other cities in the coming years.

On the Road in manuscript form on exhibit at the Lilly Library in Bloomington, Indiana through 10 May. Owned by Jim Irsay, owner of the Indianapolis Colts of the National Football League at an auction for \$2.43 million.

Julz Rulz: Inside the Mind of Jules Feiffer at the New York Historical Society through 18 May.

Feiffer's Family Tree, which features cartoons and comic strips that have influenced Feiffer's work is also

