

Dissertation Review of Weronika Trojańska (date of birth: 08.05.1986)

Fluxus is in a permanent state of improvisation

The Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław Doctoral School

Field of art in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation

Description of the work (written):

The dissertation is primarily structured in three main parts plus an introduction and conclusion section, with the main parts addressing questions of the history and culture of Fluxus, the operations of the Event Score and its relation to originality and authorship, and in what way Fluxus contributes or remains relevant to contemporary art and society. Central to the dissertation is the candidate's emphasis on their personal relationship to the topic. This includes both their approach to Fluxus as an artist (performing Fluxus works and developing new projects that carry the Fluxus ethos or spirit) and their approach to research which is fundamentally oriented around personal interviews with Fluxus and related artists. The dissertation therefore carries a rather "informal" tone and is grounded in personal anecdote and experience. Such an approach is reflective of Fluxus in general, as a movement or artistic attitude that holds an ambivalent relation to institutional structures and formal discourses. As the candidate highlights, Fluxus is hard to grasp and to pin down, and it is mostly directed toward the terrain of everyday life, which remains part of its power and charm. This finds elaboration in the discussion on the Event Score, and how Fluxus sits unsteadily between the individual and the collective, as well as between notions of originality and reenactment or reperformance. As the candidate presents, the Event Score emerges as an important carrier of Fluxus, capturing its commitment to openness, temporality, indeterminacy and the trans-subjective. Importantly, the dissertation engages with the complicated approach George Maciunas had to establishing Fluxus as a brand and in what way questions of control and copyright shape Fluxus art. Investigating the nature of the Event Score also leads the candidate to wrestle with questions of reenactment and reperformance, posing different perspectives and references that help in understanding the unique approach Fluxus articulates (particularly through Claire Bishop's idea of "delegated performance"); leading the candidate to speculate as to the possibility of the Event Score itself functioning as a verb (to *event-score* a particular work). As the Event Score is an invitation to others, in terms of performing, enacting, and staging, questions of originality and authorship are also pronounced. The dissertation offers many important perspectives on the topic, following the candidate's own personal experience in staging "Cut Piece" by Yoko Ono in 2017. The candidate also suggests that Fluxus is perhaps best "archived" by way of the body, storing its instructional pieces and approach by way of embodied enactments that are then carried or stored in the body's own memories (and transmitted down through generations). In following such arguments, Fluxus emerges both as an artistic project as well as a general ethos or "creative spirit" passed across cultural lineages, territories and practices.

This finds articulation in the candidate's reflections on the relevance of Fluxus today. Positioning Fluxus as mindfulness, the candidate highlights how it continues to provide an important intervention onto the social, political turbulence of contemporary times; it reminds of

the “beauty” found in everyday life, as well as helping us laugh at the absurdity of the world. Through their own creative exploration and enactment of Fluxus Event Scores as part of the research project, the candidate reveals how Fluxus brings us into forms of presence, helping us to be attentive to small details, to the passing of time and the ephemeral qualities of daily life. Fluxus emerges as a type of meditation practice, erasing the lines often separating life and art. There is a holistic possibility found in Fluxus, one that brings body and mind, daily tasks and conscious awareness together. These are significant aspects that make Fluxus more important than ever the candidate argues, suggesting that Fluxus brings play, improvisation, humor and contemplation into art and society in profound ways that are too easily obscured or exhausted by today’s attention economies (not to mention its innumerable political conflicts).

Finally, the dissertation further contains an appendix containing an archive of written email correspondences (based on a questionnaire) between the candidate and various artists and cultural workers, as well as personal photographs. The written archive gives unedited insight onto how Fluxus is understood by different practitioners; and along with the dissertation’s informative endnotes, the archive provides a parallel narrative or research framework probing Fluxus as a multi-dimensional or polyphonic practice and legacy.

The dissertation works at maintaining a careful and sympathetic relation to Fluxus, and acts as a personal chronicle of the candidate’s experience. In this sense, it does much in attuning with the overall tone of Fluxus. Given this, I would have appreciated hearing more about how the research project has impacted the candidate’s artistic practice and work: has anything changed for the candidate through the research process? How do they understand their own contemporary artistic context (where is the candidate situated, practically, discursively?) and in what ways does Fluxus enable the candidate to develop or elaborate their practice? There is very little insight offered on the candidate’s own artistic aims or concerns. And furthermore, it would have been helpful to consider what shortcomings or limitations emerge in terms of considering the relevance of Fluxus today – or perhaps to identify contemporary artistic projects and works that carry something of Fluxus while challenging the defining qualities or methods of it? Some indications do come through in the final section where the candidate shares their attempt to practice Fluxus on a daily basis – and how this led to certain insights (Fluxus as bodily practice, as mindfulness, and how Fluxus can be thought in a contemporary context). Such perspectives if elaborated could allow for moving Fluxus into different contexts, or expanding in what ways Fluxus participates in a broader cultural framework today.

Artwork:

The candidate has also developed an online app, Event Swirl, which functions as the main artistic component of the project. Event Swirl invites participants or users to create their own “event scores” as well as to respond to others’ scores; the app aims to carry the ethos of Fluxus into other spaces, accessing or activating the digital network as a space for Fluxus-like activity. Event Swirl is a welcoming and simple site, as well as invitation, allowing for event-scoring as a practice. This includes a relation to “games” and perhaps game culture, reclaiming the playfulness of Fluxus as the basis for online sharing. The Event Score operates as a device for both personal practice or enactment as well as for sharing responses and documentation: these

are collected as comments and attached images, videos or sound materials. Through inviting people to join the app and function as a network community, Event Swirl also activates participation, prompting users' involvement.

I appreciate how the candidate positions Event Swirl as an artistic work, as well as a platform for facilitating network community activity or play. As the app is still rather "young" it's hard to fully evaluate to what degree it can achieve creating "social bonds" and to what degree the game is functioning to activate users' relation to daily worlds as well as each other. As the app depends entirely on users bringing input, and being ready to respond and share, it may potentially fall short in keeping people's attention (amidst the deeply exhausting and over-stimulating online activity we're called upon to sustain today). But perhaps the project will help in creating a better balance between on- and off-line life, reminding that the internet can also be a place for play.

Conclusion:

Based on reading and analysis of the concept and the realization of the dissertation, and after taking into consideration the creative output, I recommend an academic Ph.D. title in the field of art, in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation be granted to Weronika Trojańska.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. LaBelle', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Dr. Brandon LaBelle, 14 April 2025 / Berlin