



BORN SYDNEY 1950

LIVES AND WORKS IN SYDNEY

Queue Action 1971 Photo: William Yang

WAS IT FLUXUS SPEAKING ?

In 1971, when I was in my 3rd year as an undergraduate in the Faculty of Architecture at Sydney University, I organised a number of *Queue Actions*. In these works, queues of students were carefully assembled and photographed as 'environmental sculptures' (akin to the bricks, say, in Carl Andre's famous sculpture *Lever*) at various locations around campus. It was noted that the 'normal associations and connotations of queues persisted despite the removal of the normal conditions and contexts of queues'. This body of work was subsequently exhibited at Central Street Gallery, Sydney in the exhibition *Open Wide* in 1971. At the time I was unaware of Fluxus, though I do believe that I may have performed a George Brecht piece with Aleks Danko, to do with a chair carried and sat upon in locations around the Sydney CBD in 1972 and I had dutifully carried out the instructions for Mike Parr's *Poem* at 6pm on Friday, March 19, 1971 near Lake Northam, Victoria Park in Sydney. (Mike returned the favour on October 3, 1982 when he asked me to perform his piece for the *n-space* exhibition at the Temple of the Winds pavilion in the Melbourne Botanic Gardens: *IT (as an object at large)* or *IT (as an object at bay)*.) But the more important fact was that I was unaware that the founder and self-appointed chairman of Fluxus was a Lithuanian - George Maciunas.

In 1971, under the spell of the 'post-object', I certainly believed that 'art' had to do with the same qualities that Fluxus held in high esteem: 'wit', 'no money', 'sincerity', 'an idea about art', 'sense of game', 'humanity'. I saw these qualities in the local artists I was attracted to. And who can, even now, forget Neil Evan's *Internal Performance* of threadworms in 1971 or Ian Milliss' demarcation of space with masking tape in 1970: *Walk along this line?* In 1972 I performed *Group Colour Theory* in *The Joe Bonomo Story* at Watters Gallery in Sydney with a number of other artists - Sam Bienstock, Vivienne Binns, Allan Bosanquet, Tim Burns, Aleks Danko, Mitch Johnson, Robyn Ravlich and Alec Tzannes. If only we had called it a 'Fluxfest' instead of a 'Show of Strength'!

I had, however, in 1969 been part of the Christo work team on his *Wrapped Coast* and I note that 'CHRISTO BAY' figures in Ken Friedman's Fluxmap on page 60 of Dick Higgins' book *The Epickall Quest of the Brothers Dichtung and other Outrages* in the august company of 'CITÉ OF BEN', 'MACIUNAS MOUNTAINS', 'DUCHAMP ISLAND', 'CAGE ISLAND', 'LAKE PAIK', 'BRECHT' and 'BLOCK ISLAND'. So perhaps it was in Christo's work that I first heard Fluxus speaking. Then in 1985, Gilbert Silverman of Detroit, who owns the definitive Fluxus collection came to visit me. And later in 1989 the Fluxus-like political interventions of the President of Lithuania, Vytautas Landsbergis precipitated the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union. So what I would like to do here, if I may, is to retrieve for myself a connection, albeit a tenuous one, to Fluxus - a connection that might be undecidable: both true and false.

Selected Exhibitions

- 1993 *Diaspora*, National Museum of Art, Riga, Latvia
Osaka Painting Triennale, Osaka (awarded Grand Prize)
- 1989 *Imants Tillers: 19301*, National Art Gallery, Wellington
- 1988 *Imants Tillers: 1978 - 1988*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London
- 1987 *Avant Garde in the Eighties*, Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles
- 1986 *42nd Venice Biennale*, Australian Pavilion, Venice
- 1984 *An Australian Accent*, P. S. I, New York
- 1982 *Documenta 7*, Kassel
- 1979 *3rd Biennale of Sydney: European Dialogue*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 1975 *13th São Paulo Biennale*, São Paulo
- 1973 Watters Gallery, Sydney (first solo exhibition)
Object and Idea, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (first group exhibition)