



## GREAT BEAR PAMPHLET SERIES

Originally published by Something Else Press, New York, 1965–67. Republished by Primary Information, New York, 2007

Named (with typical offhandedness) after the company that supplied his office with distilled water for its cooler, the “Great Bear Pamphlets” series allowed Something Else Press publisher Dick Higgins to issue small, often timely brochures sampling the recent output of writer-artists he favored and, in some cases, provide a foretaste of books he would later publish in their entirety. Much of this literature—scripts for happenings and Fluxus events, experimental poems, theoretical treatises, quasi-musical notations, and the like—was fresh then and remains fresh now. Only the status of its ilk has changed. What was once

the antiestablishment underground is now the subject of dissertations and symposia.

In 1967, Higgins offered twenty “Great Bear Pamphlets” for a “combination price” of \$15. (Nearly all the pamphlets retailed for a buck or less.) This new reprint is a steal at ten times the price. Even as it takes certain liberties with the originals (e.g., “correcting” by *Alison Knowles*, the first pamphlet, by inserting Higgins’ Great Bear logo where it had not originally been) and can’t really recapture the sensuality of their paper stock or color (the reprints are brighter, stiffer, smoother, and a bit heavier), the new box set honors not simply the material in the pamphlets, but the spirit of Higgins’ series as a whole. To some, the tooled wood box containing the reprints may seem a bit precious, but it fits Higgins’ own production val-

ues (as evidenced by the similar boxes encasing early Press books by Robert Filliou and Wolf Vostell).

Significantly, the mere reappearance of the “Great Bear Pamphlets” reminds us that Higgins’ goal with Something Else Press was to present the woolliest of experimental page-work with the highest standards of printing and quality of material. The pamphlets were as much chapbooks as hand-scores, as much bibliophilia as ephemera, as much small gifts as pass-along pocket objects. Maintaining, and improving upon, the emerging do-it-yourself sensibility of Brazilian concrete poetry magazines, German broadsides, the “mimeograph revolution” of New York’s Lower East Side, and the funky perfection of George Maciunas’ Fluxus collations, Higgins saw the book in all its forms as a site of artistic

revolution and tradition, and saw his job as furthering the artistic tradition of revolution. The little crate containing the “Great Bear Pamphlets” series is no reliquary; it is a jack-in-the-box without a crank, liable, even forty years on, to pounce playfully on the mind.

—Peter Frank