

# The Impossible and the Impromptu

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## *The Fluxus Newspaper 1964-1979* (Primary Information)

The Fluxus group combined the deliberate ridiculousness and provocation of Dada with appropriation, publications, concerts, conceptual art and happenings, all intended to challenge traditional ideas about the arts and make them more integral to contemporary life.

The group was international in scope, with a fluctuating membership of musicians, visual artists, publishers, poets, authors, etc. From 1964-1979 a loose editorial board, calling themselves the Fluxus Editorial Council for Fluxus, produced eleven issues of *The Fluxus Newspaper*, which are now collected here in this beautifully produced paperback.

Every issue is varied, each a different mix of announcement, reportage, photography, collages, surreal imaginary adverts, art and silliness. Photos of clocks, fish, Victorian group portraits, conceptual texts, cartoons, posters and programmes rub shoulders with idiotic obituaries, news items, weird graphics and other, sometimes illegible, texts and images.

Historically, it is a prime example of art text work, zine culture and alternative newspapers: part of the inspiration and informal context and support network for the likes of *International Times* and other countercultural magazines, then later on the resurgence of punk and squat documentation. With a strong D.I.Y. attitude, and an inclusiveness to its contents, the Fluxus newspaper is now a key document in the archive of what at the time was mostly a sidelined and ignored movement.

Now, of course, Yoko Ono (whose work is included here) has a Tate Modern retrospective to her name, Joseph Beuys is a fêted fine artist, Jackson Mac Low had many volumes of his poetry published, and La Monte Young is being reconsidered as a key part of minimalist music.

Who would have guessed back then, however, the way that conceptual art, community arts, installations and performances are now mainstream activities, studied and imitated in art colleges and studio blocks around the world? Fluxus' attention to detail, obsession, the everyday and their engagement with the possibilities of alternative publishing – packs of cards, pamphlets, napkins, scores and films – would influence generations of musicians, writers, artists, publishers and performers.

The very shape and form of this book still convey the excitement, the possibilities, the essence of Fluxus. Anything went and everything was possible. Members would rock up and perform or read aloud in the street, curate events in their houses or studios, organise overlong ceremonies and rituals, impossible weddings and impromptu exhibitions.

They would note the relationship between objects such as the circles of kitchen sink drain, whirlpool, tornado and worn away rock; organise grids of unconnected objects, forcing connections to be made; write impossible musical scores; explore ideas of the self and body long before that went mainstream; and they managed to keep a straight face. This book is inspirational, witty and ridiculous but it is also an important document and a reminder that we still need provocation and the deflation of self-important 'high culture' when it takes itself too seriously.

**Rupert Loydell**