

humor – rumor – clamor

Fluxus from the collection of Archivio Conz, Berlin

Galerija Vartai Vilnius

Fluxus is always more or always less; Fluxus is not subject to quantity. Fluxus is set in the future; Fluxus has not even begun yet. Fluxus is a spirituality of movement, of becoming conscious, of constant departure and announcement. Fluxus is an art more of writing, articulation, and gesticulation—clamor—than of form and color. This art carries the language of tradition and of addressing the present with humor.

“humor – rumor – clamor” provides an insight into one of the most extensive collections of Fluxus, concrete poetry, and Lettrism, which the Italian collector, publisher, and photographer Francesco Conz (1935–2010) had assembled over more than 40 years. Robert Burton wrote his “Anatomy of Melancholy” (1621) from the Hippocratic perspective of humoral theory, in which humor referred to the four bodily fluids that, when in balance, were believed to determine human health. Any imbalance in the humors led to the moods of the sanguine (blood), the choleric (phlegm), the phlegmatic (yellow bile), and the melancholic (black bile). Humor, Burton wrote, “purges the blood, making the body young and lively.”

The exhibition at Galerija Vartai combines melancholy, irony, and humor with the artists Eric Andersen, Robert Ashley, George Brecht, Henri Chopin, Philip Corner, Jean Dupuy, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Eugen Gomringer, Bernard Heidsieck, Geoffrey Hendricks, Dick Higgins, Alice Hutchins, Dorothy Iannone, Isidore Isou, Joe Jones, Allan Kaprow, Alison Knowles, Milan Knizak, George Maciunas, Walter Marchetti, Nam June Paik, Carolee Scheemann, Mieko Shiomi, Robert Watts, Emmett Williams, and others.

Francesco Conz was a truly unusual collector. Had he stepped out of a novel, Umberto Eco could have written him, a man caught between the knowledge of a scribe and a belief in the magic of art. He published over 500 editions and became one of the most important publishers of art editions in the last third of the 20th century. Not an artist himself, he wanted collecting and publishing art to be understood as his own aesthetic practice. The collection comprises around 20,000 works, including 68 prepared pianos and grand pianos, thousands of paintings, drawings, photographs, sculptures and editions by artists from all continents. Francesco Conz was, as it were, part of his collection; he himself was Fluxus, always on the move, always on the road.

Fluxus emerged in Wiesbaden in the early 1960s from the spirit of music and performance surrounding the designer, ideologist, visionary and failed real estate agent from New York, Lithuanian-born George (Jurgis) Mačiūnas. Art neither for museums nor for the market, art for everyone, anytime and anywhere – today, museums around the world are showing major Fluxus retrospectives. It was meant to be a movement, and like a jug with a handle reaching out into the world, this art was supposed to spread throughout society. It did not become a movement, as no one wanted to submit to Mačiūnas’s “programme”, but a mindset united the “Fluxists” worldwide in a boundarycrossing art of “intermedia”. Poetry and music, writing and sound are at the origin of Fluxus art. Art for a world that may one day be so enlightened by these works that art will no longer be necessary. This moment has not yet arrived, but as

Mačiūnas' social utopia and as a human necessity, we should maintain this aspiration and say, along with the artists, that Fluxus has not even begun yet.

Author of the text – Prof. Dr. Hubertus v. Amelunxen

Curators – Hubertus v. Amelunxen, Linas Bliškevičius

The exhibition presents the following artists – Eric Andersen, Robert Ashley, George Brecht, Henri Chopin, Philip Corner, Claudio Costa, Jean Dupuy, Claire Falkenstein, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Eugen Gomringer, Bernard Heidsiek, Geoffrey Hendricks, Dick Higgins, Alice Hutchins, Dorothy Iannone, Isidore Isou, Joe Jones, Alan Kaprow, Milan Knížák, Alison Knowles, Arrigo Lora-Totino, George Mačiūnas, Milvia Maglione, Walter Marchetti, Eugenio Miccini, Nam June Pike, Harry Ruhé, Gerhard Rühm, Alain Satié, Carolee Schneemann, Mieko Shiomi, Ben Vautier, Robert Watts, Emmett Williams