

A Post-Fluxus Island: Red Fox Press and Post-Fluxus Artistic Practices

Research Thesis

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by

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Abstract

The Fluxus paradigm, which took shape in the 1960s, is a movement that was founded on an experimental artistic lifestyle. Artists sought to synthesize art and life and emphasized intermedia artistic practices that subverted the mainstream art world through creating art that was simple, playful, and sometimes created by chance. Fluxus has become an extremely enigmatic artistic movement over time and has caused some scholars to concretize it and drain its life force. Other artists and scholars believe that Fluxus is still fully alive today - just iterated in a different form. This is the crux of Fluxus thought: is it ever changing and constantly adapting to contemporary culture. While I do not contend that this key characteristic is false, I assert that the key aspects of Fluxus ideologies in the twenty-first century can also open up new avenues of interpretation. I also wish to introduce the idea that Fluxus has inspired a relatively new artistic practice - a “post-Fluxus” practice.

Francis Van Maele, Antic-Ham, and their Red Fox Press are the epitome of this “post-Fluxus” mode of artistic practice. For Franticham, Fluxus is a touchstone for many of their publications. But they also go beyond that paradigm with their use of contemporary technology, the way in which they craft their global artistic community, and the way they view their place in the complex history of art. While asserting that a “post-Fluxus” mode of artistic practice exists within Red Fox Press creates more questions than it answers, it allows us to think critically about the issues that come with understanding the history of art as a linear progression and based within the traditions of its predecessors. Instead, thinking about “post-Fluxus” as an artistic practice that coexists with Fluxus means that the history that surrounds this movement is even more ambiguous and dynamic than it is currently thought to be. *Red Fox Press and Post-Fluxus*

Artistic Practices complicates a tradition that already has experimentation and constant change built into its foundation.

Part One: Rethinking the History of Fluxus

To push Fluxus toward the twenty-first century means to grasp the group's anti-historicist spirit.

- Giovanni Carandente¹

The final sentences of Ken Friedman's Introduction to *The Fluxus Reader* challenge the reader to think of Fluxus in terms of both the present and future. As Friedman remarks: "[t]o the degree that Fluxus is a body of ideas and practices, we are visible and we remain so. To the degree that Fluxus is or may be an art form, it may well have gone underground already. If this is true, who can possibly say that Fluxus is or isn't dead? We don't know 'whodunit,' we don't know who does it and we certainly don't know who may do it in the future."² Certainly, the future of Fluxus seemed troublesome when Friedman wrote this in the 1990s. And for most scholars and artists, it is difficult to historicize Fluxus because of its anti-historicist spirit. The question thus remains: how are we to discuss Fluxus in any productive form? Some try to write about the history of the movement while others disagree with this emphasis on Fluxus coming to an end because they still see it as a living force. Since no one can truly claim that Fluxus – whether as a movement or lifestyle – has breathed its last breath or remains alive, the question of its "history" thus becomes problematic. Addressing the scholarly work surrounding Fluxus and its history will also allow us to think critically about current manifestations of Fluxus, including the possibility of a "post-Fluxus" moment. This potential for seeing Fluxus as a contemporary practice is not so much an assertion of a new chapter in the history of Fluxus; rather, it is symptomatic of an anti-historical movement and its transformation over time.

In order to grasp how the praxis of Fluxus is transformed in the present, it is crucial to look back at its historical emergence, specifically the evolution of its seemingly transcendent identity. In his essay in *The Fluxus Reader*, “Developing a Fluxible Forum: Early Performance and Publishing,” Owen Smith recounts one of the first Fluxus festivals at the Dusseldorf Art Academy in 1962. At the beginning of the event, art critic Jean-Pierre Wilhelm spoke to the crowd and exclaimed that those in attendance must move beyond the manifestos of artistic movements of the past, specifically the manifestos of Dada and Surrealism. A manifesto seems to do no more than yell loudly and assertively at a reader while never enacting tangible change. This is where Fluxus and those involved wanted to set themselves apart and begin something more radical, more real. While it is important to recognize the influences of the core practices and ideologies of this movement, it is also important to avoid overstating the impact of such legacies like Dada. Due to this historical connection, art critics and historians label Fluxus as “neo-Dada.” Wilhelm sees this tag as “very badly chosen, erroneous even” because Fluxus has “absolutely different intentions than Dada.”³ This is where one finds a cornerstone of Fluxus thought - that history and the paradigms that it implements cannot be used to understand Fluxus. Dick Higgins explains a Fluxus view of history’s constraints when he claims: “[f]luxus is not a moment in history, or an art movement. Fluxus is a way of doing things, a tradition, and a way of life and death.”⁴ Understanding Fluxus means not to see it in relation to its predecessors but to understand it autonomously – independent from any preconceived ideas about its position in history.

While recognizing that Dadaism is commonly seen as the key artistic movement that influenced Fluxus, it must be asserted that they need to be separated. Certainly, Dadaism and Fluxus share universal ideas that seek to subvert not only the mainstream world of art but also

national hegemony. Dadaism was spawned out of the tumultuous nature of the Great War in 1916. The art of Dada was a response to a war and a world that left its inhabitants uncertain of what the future might hold, especially given the horrific reality of their contemporary age. Like Fluxus, Dada artists sought to create art outside of the norm and away from the influence of capitalism, commercialism, and the bourgeois. Their so-called “anti-art” was based in intermedia and centered on an aesthetic that, like Fluxus, mocked orthodox attitudes. Not unlike the story of Fluxus, in which contemporary iterations give George Maciunas almost full responsibility for coining the term “fluxus” and for making Fluxus into a way of life, the story of Dadaism seems unable to be told without the intervention of Marcel Duchamp. Although Duchamp attempted to stand outside of the movement, he is still very much portrayed as a major contributor to this era because he coined the term “anti-art.”⁵ Fluxus thus bears a marginal resemblance to Dadaism, not only in terms of ideology but also in the way in which it is perceived in history.

In the 1946 edition of *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin*, Marcel Duchamp described what drew him to the spirit of Dada: “It was a way to get out of a state of mind — to avoid being influenced by one’s immediate environment, or by the past: to get away from clichés — to get free.”⁶ This sentiment seems to invoke aspects of Fluxus, especially when we think back to some of the first performances of Fluxus, even those performances at the first Festum Fluxorum Fluxus. At this festival, Ben Patterson performed his *Paper Piece* work, in which he had various performers hold various sizes of paper, rip them up, crumple them, and throw them into the audience. Most of these pieces of paper had messages that related to the goals of Fluxus. One piece that was documented read:

PURGE the world of bourgeois sickness, ‘intellectual’, professional & commercialized

culture, PURGE the world of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusionistic art, mathematics art, PURGE THE WORLD OF 'EUROPEANISM!' ... [...] PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART. Promote living art, anti-art, promote NON-ART REALITY to be grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes, and professionals ... [...] FUSE the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action.⁷

Although Patterson's performance piece is a very early Fluxus work, it reveals some key ideologies. These urgent phrases presented on disfigured pieces of paper connect to the past, but more importantly show invested concern for the present - and future, even when a faint spirit of Dada is noticed in the need to disassociate from mass culture, from the banality of everyday lives. The reference to Dada is also seen in the references to anti-art and a general message that implores the audience to produce art outside of hegemonic paradigms. However, a break from past traditions can also be read here. Patterson writes a call to action for society. The visual poetry evokes a message of social justice that implicates the audience not only in the work but in the sociopolitical issues of the world - something with which Dadaism was not concerned. As Ken Friedman points out in his essay, "Fluxus and Company," "[Dada] was nihilistic, a millenarian movement in modernist terms. Fluxus was constructive."⁸ Although Patterson's performance was abrasive and partially negative, it was not nihilistic but positive. *Paper Piece* conveys a very productive message and demonstrates signs that Fluxus is, even from the beginning, concerned with the future. In this sense, it is counterproductive to attempt to give Fluxus a narrow interpretation that suffocates it from any sort of growth. In order to determine if Fluxus, and all its tenets, has a continued legacy today, it is necessary to examine the ways in

which it is historicized by scholars and critics. Most attempts to place it in a historical context categorize it as having specific and finite characteristics. This also yields to giving Fluxus its own finite period of existence in the broader discipline of art history. One way in which art historians pigeonhole Fluxus is by tying it directly and exclusively to the creator and coiner of the label itself - George Maciunas. A popular view is that Fluxus, as a movement in the United States, lived with Maciunas through the 1960s until his death from pancreatic cancer in 1978.⁹ This oversimplified model given to us by collectors and curators today proves to be problematic when discussing a set of ideas that were supposedly designed to subvert paradigms and transcend labels and time.

In her essay, "Fluxus Fortuna," Hannah Higgins describes the various ways in which art historians, critics, collectors, and curators manipulate the legacy of Fluxus in order to create a coherent narrative that neatly places Fluxus in a linear time frame and makes it simple to categorize. In reality, the multi-layered nature of Fluxus makes it extremely hard to discuss and quantify in any way. Higgins discusses the Maciunas-based paradigm in multiple contexts. For instance, when she considers the discourse of this issue in the United States, Higgins questions the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection and its curator, Jon Hendricks. From the writings in the catalogues that follow the various exhibitions of this collection, it is clear that Hendricks simplifies Fluxus as being almost exclusively Maciunas' project - a project that hoped to serve a specific political purpose.¹⁰ This is concerning because, as Higgins states, "[t]his proprietary perspective has determined the content of five catalogues, two of which are available to the general public as definitive materials about Fluxus."¹¹ Higgins even discusses the title of Jon Hendrick's first catalogue for the collection, *Fluxus Etc.* She states: "[T]he 'etc.' in the catalogue title, therefore, reflects Hendrick's early attempt to include material outside of his own

strict definition of Fluxus, and to which he attributed much of the group's energy."¹² For Higgins and for many others, these catalogues are quite unfortunate because they do not provide an open-ended discourse that would lay the bedrock for the future of Fluxus. Since this collection is the most prominent amalgamation of Fluxus material in the United States, the writing that surrounds it becomes instituted as part of the canon of Fluxus history.

Within the last three decades of the 20th century, Fluxus went from an amorphous idea that a small group of people in New York City and beyond lived out to a commodified and strictly defined "movement." By 1988, the entire history and artistic production of Fluxus could be summed up into a single coffee-table book - *Fluxus Codex* by Harry Abrams. Therefore, Higgins bluntly claims that the Maciunas-based paradigm that Fluxus is defined by in the United States "is both historically inaccurate and morally indefensible."¹³ While understanding the beginnings of Fluxus and the players that were part of its evolution is important, historicizing it until it is so simplified and concrete discounts the very foundation on which Fluxus was built.

Higgins further details the origins of these problematic ways of thinking about Fluxus when she describes the internal debate members of Fluxus had regarding the experimental composer, Karl Heinz Stockhausen. While George Maciunas was organizing the first Fluxus concerts, he contacted Stockhausen to see if he would be willing to work with other members to create a concert. As it turned out, Maciunas was not exactly convinced of Stockhausen's relevance within the Fluxus community due to their fundamental ideological differences on the purpose of art and whom it should address. Essentially, Maciunas thought Stockhausen was too conformist and pandered too much to mainstream society. This feud compromised Nam June Paik, who was a friend and colleague of Stockhausen, as well as an important early member of Fluxus. When it came time Stockhausen's multimedia opera, *Originale*, at Charlotte Moorman's

1964 Annual New York Festival of the Avant-Garde, the Fluxus members were divided. Artists such as Paik, Dick Higgins, and George Brecht were participants on stage. On the other hand, George Maciunas, Ben Vautier, and Takako Saito were a few of the artists who protested against Stockhausen's performance with signs reading: "Fight the rich man's snob art."¹⁴ From this display of disagreement between artists who were supposed to share similar ideas, the media was able to categorize Fluxus as centered around Maciunas as well as being almost exclusively interested in political upheaval. Higgins explains how this incident was somewhat responsible for the subsequent historicization of Fluxus:

[The] coverage of the demonstration, while originating from very different ideological orientations, reflects the demonstrators' version of Fluxus as a united, politically motivated and anti-art group. Not surprisingly, this version of Fluxus constitutes the ideational core of how Fluxus has been historically defined. For simplicity's sake, the term "Maciunas-based paradigm" can be applied to this framework, since this model defines Fluxus exclusively in terms of Maciunas and his politics.¹⁵

Here, Higgins problematizes the Maciunas-centered definition of Fluxus while exposing the internal variations of this large community.

Pinpointing the foundation of Fluxus in relation to one man and one political agenda discredits the rest of those who subscribe to the Fluxus lifestyle. By being involved in this amorphous community, Higgins seems to argue, one is able to be in a constant state of change. This is even more evident when she argues that, "[since] all Fluxus members who participated in the concert faced expulsion from Fluxus by order of Maciunas, and since demonstrators did not

face that threat, the demonstration functioned as a site of difference within Fluxus, as it did in Maciunas' mind."¹⁶ She continues: "This paradox discloses the core tension within the Maciunas-based paradigm. The political core of Fluxus, even if it were located within the single person of Maciunas, is highly unstable."¹⁷ Higgins then claims that "the Stockhausen incident suggests a model for thinking about Fluxus as politically multiple and socially elastic in terms of its avant-garde heritage." She concludes this discussion by making a distinction that there are three options by which members of Fluxus at this event could have acted. First, they had the opportunity to stand with Maciunas and recognize his central role. Second, they could participate in *Originale* and therefore would have represented Fluxus that preceded Maciunas. Third, which is the most important and poignant option, is to do both - participate with Stockhausen while demonstrating with Maciunas. This may seem improbable but Higgins contests that this third option is "a present model - where the historic ties preclude but do not necessarily preempt current and future identification."¹⁸ Finally, she states: "[since] Fluxus is still active today in varying degrees, it is the last approach that is the most historically accurate."¹⁹ Since Higgins claims that this event and the turbulent and ambiguous relationships between members of the community demonstrated the quintessential nature of Fluxus, its very foundation is revealed to be unstable.

In the practices of Fluxus and the subsequent discourse surrounding it, there is a strong emphasis on community and its importance in uniting the diverse body of artists. However, as is evident in the Stockhausen case, and as can be seen in the attempts by George Maciunas to foster a sense of community within Fluxus, the situations are never without controversy. In his essay, "Fluxus As A Laboratory," Craig Saper recounts Maciunas's socio-poetic project to provide better housing for artists living in SoHo. Saper writes:

The first Fluxhouse Cooperative was in the building at 80 Wooster Street that later became the home of Jonas Mekas' Film-Maker's Cinematheque. Maciunas purchased the empty loft building in 1967. Hollis Melton explains that the city fought the formation of the Cinematheque as well as the cooperative. In reaction, Mekas 'called a meeting of artists from the neighborhood' that led to the formation of the SoHo Artists Association. They sponsored street festivals attracting thousands of tourists. The city, realizing the potential gain, eased its position, and in 1970 allowed artists to live in loft buildings. The term 'artists' loft' soon became a natural phrase to describe a place where artists lived. Maciunas organized fifteen co-ops between 1966 and 1975. He used the logic of art to solve the problem of a living situation.²⁰

Saper uses this incident, as well as the practice early Fluxus members had of creating "passports" that allowed entrance to a state of mind, as examples of how Fluxus activity "functioned as test or experiments rather than as an entrance into a 'new life style' or a social(ist) utopia . . . that is, experiments are always contingent, chasing and in flux rather than continuous, stable, settled or decided."²¹ From Saper's narratives, as with those of Higgins, the formative years of Fluxus seemed to have been precarious times, in which their ideas on community were abstract in nature and never fully solidified among those who practiced the lifestyle.

Those involved lived their life for the art and for the Fluxus cause first and foremost. They valued breaking the mold rather than thinking practically. Subsequently, these members were a part of something that caused their lives to be tumultuous and filled with constant change. They had unstable living situations in terms of where they identified geographically, politically, and

ideologically. Essentially, it was a life of abstraction - a pseudo-reality in which artists thrived. Due to the inability of Fluxus to be concretized or understood in a logical and linear sense, it changes and develops over time into something different, which further separates this movement from any other major artistic movement in the twentieth and twenty-first century. As Ken Friedman states in his closing essay in the *The Fluxus Reader*:

[The] first Fluxus disappeared a long time ago. It replaced itself with the many forms of Fluxus that came after. The many varieties of Fluxus activity took on their own life and had a significant history of their own. It is unrealistic and historically inaccurate to imagine a Fluxus controlled by one man. Fluxus was co-created by many people and it has undergone a continuous process of co-creation and renewal for four decades.²²

Friedman continues this thought a few sentences later by asserting that “[f]luxism as a way of thinking and working is very much alive.”²³ Friedman echoes a motif here that has been at the core of thought by artists and scholars regarding the afterlife of Fluxus. Indeed, Friedman's closing remarks reveal the crux of the entire *The Fluxus Reader*. For these scholars, Fluxus is still present in contemporary culture in some form. Identifying its whereabouts and with whom it resides is difficult to isolate since it holds such an anti-historicist attitude. This leads to a dichotomy in the reception of Fluxus. Some scholars have different investments in writing the history than others. For those like the Silvermans and Jon Hendricks, they need Fluxus to be a historical phenomenon, while for others it extends into the present. Since the former investment seems to be the current discourse of Fluxus that has been popularized, it makes distinguishing its contemporary presence an even more onerous task. For Ken Friedman, Hannah Higgins, Owen

Smith, and countless artists - past and present - who work in the Fluxus tradition, the spirit of Fluxus lives on in some form and it is not just a dated historical phenomenon.

If Fluxus is indeed still alive today, it must at least be in a changed form. As Dick Higgins, father of Hannah Higgins, puts it, “[f]luxus means change among other things. The Fluxus of 1992 is not the Fluxus of 1962 and if it pretends to be - then it is fake. The real Fluxus moves out from its old center into many directions, and the paths are not easy to recognize without lining up new pieces, middle pieces and old pieces together.”²⁴ Since the first two decades of the twenty-first century are much different than the mid-twentieth century, it follows that Fluxus is no longer the Fluxus some wish to think it is. Higgins’ quote begs the following question: How do we talk about and consider the life of Fluxus practices today if it so embedded in a historical discourse that is paradoxically anti-historical? This question is tied to the idea that there must be places where Fluxus influences but is also left behind. Certainly, there are artists and groups who still perform a Fluxus lifestyle out of nostalgia, wish fulfillment, or the way to carry the torch into a new, but related, direction. However, if there are Fluxus practices that exist today, couldn’t there also be practices that represent a “post-Fluxus” moment? I contend that this is a strong possibility in our contemporary culture. Since a “post-Fluxus” movement cannot be taken into account or diagramed by the theory of progression by Fluxus theorizers (Fig. 1), it does not make it any easier to talk about Fluxus. “Post-Fluxus” was born out of the 1960s and it resembles the original Fluxus in basic ways, but it is very much its own entity and has its own place in history. In this sense, this label both acknowledges the current issues and paradoxes in the study of Fluxus even as it can also be used as an opportunity to widen the scope of Fluxus discourse.

Part Two: The Practices of Red Fox Press

Fluxus has been a complex system of practices and relationships.

- Ken Friedman

In *The Fluxus Reader*, in which he lays out the ideas and history of Fluxus, Ken Friedman warns the reader that they should be aware that there are two kinds of people in this world. There are those who attach Fluxus to their name in order to indicate that real influence and change is occurring, and those who use it simply for fame - “the occasional shadow of true influence.”²⁵ Whether this dichotomy is based in fact or speculation, I think it is important to make this distinction when deciphering if it is possible for an artistic practice to be influenced by the Fluxus tradition. This is why understanding the history and anti-historical ideologies of the tradition is important because this contextualization allows for a thorough questioning of the presence of Fluxus ideas and motives in twenty-first century art. This knowledge also allows for the exploration into the possibility, or lack of possibility, of this Fluxus lifestyle today. These inquiries can become insights when applied to a specific site of artistic production. One such site that is key to figuring out the post-Fluxus dilemma is the Irish artists’ studio, Red Fox Press. By viewing Red Fox Press through various lenses, a picture of what a post-Fluxus artistic practice looks like may become clear.

The village of Dugort is seated atop a cliff above the Atlantic Ocean on the north side of Achill Island on the west coast of Ireland. This village is home to a handful of restaurants, cafés, grocery stores, and blue-flag beaches. Just east of village center, at the top of the hill, is a

whitewashed cottage painted with a large red fox facing the road. The windowpanes are painted red, blue, green, and yellow and there are a few paintings of fish and mermaids facing the ocean. This building (Fig. 2) is home to the Red Fox Press screen-printing studio and the home of two artists - Francis Van Maele and Antic-Ham (Hyemee Kim).

Francis Van Maele, the founder of Red Fox Press, was born in Belgium between Bruges and Ghent in 1947. After becoming interested in photography as a young boy, Van Maele began learning how to make textiles and became competent in various screen-printing techniques. In 1977 he learned silk-screen printing in the Art Academy of Trier in Germany. This training gave him the skills he needed to devote his artistic abilities to creating artist books. In 1980, he founded Editions Phi in Luxembourg. Over time, Editions Phi became a leading publisher of poetry, theatre plays, literature, essays, and art. In 2001, Van Maele decided it was time to sell the successful publishing company and eventually sold it to the Luxembourg Newspaper, "Tageblatt." The turn of the century marked a new period in the life of Francis Van Maele. He founded Red Fox Press in 2000 and decided to move to Ireland in 2002, finally settling on the cliffs of Dugort on Achill Island in 2005. That same year, he met Hyemee Kim, also known as Antic-Ham, at a book fair in Seoul, South Korea.²⁶

Although she was born far from Ireland and was raised with a different cultural background, Antic-Ham's (Hyemee Kim) life and work shares many similarities with Van Maele. Born in Seoul, South Korea in 1974, Antic-ham studied playwriting and photography at the Seoul Arts College. This training allowed her to establish a career by making artist books with photographs, collages, drawings, silkscreen printing, and writings. She has had various artist book exhibitions and has participated in artist book fairs across the globe. She met Francis Van Maele at one of these book fairs. Having the same taste in life and work, they established a

relationship and began producing books under the name Franticham, living and working since 2005 on Achill. Franticham has a large variety of projects, ranging from a series of small artist books of visual poets from around the world to Fluxus Assembling Boxes, in which artists from around the world contribute a small work of art to the box then mail it on to the next artist on the list. They have many other solo projects as well, but Franticham produces a wide array of books under the Red Fox Press name. It is here where signs of the Fluxus spirit start to be revealed. Even the simple combination of Francis Van Maele's name and Antic-Ham's into Franticham is a poignant example of bringing two different areas of the globe together to form one community of visual culture. Through the work of Red Fox Press, artists from around the world have also come to know each other's varying artistic talents, creating a cohesive aesthetic and community that embodies a world-view the resembles – and, arguably, strays away from - a Fluxus tradition.

Just as Fluxus was invested in transnationalism and the breaking down of national borders, Franticham engages this same notion. In her essay, "Transnationalisms of Fluxus," Hannah Higgins details the ways in which Fluxus thought through an idea of geography:

Border crossings figure heavily in the works of Fluxus artists from virtually every continent and throughout its forty years of activity. In every case, however, a unique Fluxus geography is implied. It is flexible geography of altered state-lines, moving continents, mobile artists, and otherwise fluxing boundaries predicated on an elastic web of personal relationships held together by common interests, free-form socializing, and written correspondence with artists around the globe.²⁷

Coming from relatively contrasting geographic locations, Antic-Ham and Francis Van Maele are

thus united together in a rural area where neither of them had any previous ties. Achill Island has a small permanent population of 2,569 as of 2011 and Dugort alone has less than 100 inhabitants.²⁸ Additionally, the economy of Achill relies heavily on tourism. Therefore, the majority of people who come into the studio and gallery of Red Fox Press are most likely not locals. It is important, then, to understand that Franticham transcends their geographic ties to create their own artistic lives, while those who engage with their work are also traversing some sort of border – whether through visits to their space or when purchasing a publication online. Although these transnational Fluxus roots are present, they are only the foundation of the practices created through the Press.

Even though they have been around since 2000, no significant scholarly work has been written on Franticham and Red Fox Press. The majority of knowledge that can be attained about them can only be found on their website. Their website, like most websites related to Fluxus, is difficult to navigate but full of information. The home page highlights Red Fox Press's most recent publications and there is a myriad of other pages that direct the user to their mail art works, screen prints, photographs, assemblage boxes, and their seemingly endless book publications. Specifically, the artwork on their website consists of collaboration works by Franticham that range from collections of Polaroid self-portraits, silk screen prints, and images of their travels in various mediums. Other books include artist books in which Red Fox Press "invites" artists from around the world to contribute their work in a single book. I want to argue that it is through these prolific Red Fox Press publications, specifically the relation between their global collaborations and their Franticham collaborations, that a post-Fluxus tradition can be found.

"Fluxus" is even a category in their book section on their site. This section is for books that

are about “Fluxus artists,” “Fluxus homages,” and “Assembling Boxes.” Franticham began creating Assembling Boxes in 2010 which included visual poetry, prints, multiples, and collages that were explicitly inspired by Fluxus. They are currently at box #32 and will continue until they reach #40. Each box includes 23 individual pieces of art from artists from across the globe invited to participate. Present in this Assemblage Box publication is the post-Fluxus community that Red Fox Press embodies — one that is, for the most part, unambiguous in its operations, unlike the Fluxus that came before it. Looking through Boxes, it can be noticed how Franticham is affected by the legacy of the diverse artistic mediums and membership of the early Fluxus group, including poetry, photography, musical compositions, and performance remnants by a diverse array of artists from the United States, Europe, and Japan. As suggested above, Owen Smith’s essay, “Developing a Fluxible Forum,” details the key events in the developmental days of Fluxus in the 1960s. In 1964, the first Fluxus publication, *Fluxus I*, was released, intended to be the beginnings of a larger anthology and the driving force from which Fluxus would blossom. The book “consisted of a number of manila envelopes interspaced with printed sheets, all of which were bound together with bolts.”²⁹ Smith points out that the format of the book is similar to the Futurist artist Fortunato Depero’s 1927 publication, *Depero Futurista*.³⁰ In this larger context, another historical precedent from the Fluxus movement informs the work and publications facilitated by Red Fox Press.

Of further significance, the cover of each Assembling Box has one of Red Fox Press’s logos: “Franticham’s Fluxus Island” (Fig. 3). This branding has a two-fold meaning. The first is an obvious reference to the Fluxus impact on the work of Franticham and their publications under Red Fox Press. This coalescence of the contemporary practices of Franticham and their salute to their perceived predecessors is realized through this simple stamp. It acts as an

authentication that the artists included here are descendants of Fluxus in some form. Branding with the Fluxus namesake gives those who interact with the work the signal that this is somehow related to the tradition that began in the mid-twentieth century.

Additionally, the logo references Red Fox Press's actual geographic location on Achill Island off the west coast of Ireland. Achill Island, for Franticham, is a location where it is possible to live out a lifestyle with roots that can be traced back to those of Fluxus. It is a place that is relatively untouched by the contemporary world and a space where they can live and work autonomously. That is, they are not directly surrounded by any other artistic community and their artistic practices are not constantly interacting with and compared to other artists working in the same geographic location – as would have been the case in SoHo. The remote nature of Red Fox Press's location allows them to mediate their artistic experience more easily. While art is a part of Achill culture, it is not in high demand and Franticham has few expectations when it comes to artistic production. Their work is unhindered and they choose exactly with whom they associate and whom they involve in their publications. Perhaps this is the reason that the scholarly work written on them is essentially non-existent – save the few universities and museums that have acquired a work for their library collections. Therefore, this perceived ability to be removed from the hegemonic paradigms of society by existing in a more “utopian” space like Dugort on Achill is Franticham's contemporary version of Fluxus – they are living on a post-Fluxus island.

Similar to the Fluxus of the twentieth century, who created and performed art that enriched their own lives instead of conceding to the conventions of the art world, Franticham creates art that is uniquely self-reflective, contributing to their global artistic community and a larger public that the “original” Fluxus artists may have not reached in their time. As Stephen C. Foster discusses in his essay, “Historical Design and Social Purpose: A Note on the Relationships of

Fluxus to Modernism,” on the problem with defining Fluxus in the context of modernism: “[Fluxus] denied the metaphysics of the avant-garde’s ‘progress’ although it embraced its means for organizing a group. It rejected the dominant culture’s popularization of the avant-garde but embraced its myth of the ‘masses.’ It communicated with ‘Everyman,’ but warranted itself with the captive audiences for the avant-garde in the university and the market-place.”³¹ Indeed, these ideas are present within the Red Fox Press publications. At the bottom of the Internet page for their Assembling Boxes, there is a list provided that recalls who has acquired the works. While a few museums such as MOMA and the Tate are listed, the majority of acquisitions come from universities in the United Kingdom and the Midwestern United States. Red Fox Press may not be concerned with their popularity or if their art is palatable to the masses, but the fact that the bulk of their exposure is through academic institutions demonstrates that they wish to engage with the world outside of their small circle. This position is further supported by the large number of publications they sell on their website. They keep a copy of every publication they have ever created and facilitated and detailed information on the book, its content, and the number of copies left. While the website gives basic information on the history of the Press, the website is primarily a space to sell and publicize the various works. Franticham does recognize its avant-garde roots in Fluxus, but it also takes a critical move by travelling beyond the associated ideologies of this tradition by making itself relatively accessible and by engaging with institutions and the general public.

While they are indebted to the Fluxus of the past, the publications of Red Fox Press have become a new post-Fluxus movement of the twenty-first century, not only because of their recognition of past traditions but their willingness to move beyond the experimentalism of Fluxus in favor of more functional and workable practices. Besides the Assembling Boxes, the

most prominent series in the Red Fox Press *œuvre* is their “C’est Mon Dada” collection. In French, “c’est mon dada” also means “it’s my favorite thing” or “it’s my hobby” as well as “it is my dada.” According to Red Fox Press, “C’est Mon Dada” is “a collection of small hand made artists’ books dedicated to experimental, concrete and visual poetry, or any work combining text and image in the spirit of dada or fluxus.”³² The title, then, can be understood to mean that the art that is being presented in the pages of these books represents each artist’s best or most favored work and artistic medium. It also seems to make a statement that this is their Dada, their version of a movement that called into question conventional artistic practices. For Franticham and the other artists around the world that contributed artworks and books, this is their attempt to create artistic practices that pay “homage” to the legacies of both Dada and Fluxus.

The last major works that Red Fox Press and Franticham are responsible for and advertise on their website are their mail art projects – which they cleverly title “Fan Mail.” The mail art of Red Fox Press goes back to 1998 before Francis Van Maele moved permanently to Achill Island and was working in Luxembourg. In his first project publicized under Red Fox Press, entitled *Ireland Today*, Van Maele put out a call to artists to submit entries that articulated their specific “viewpoint on the Ireland of today.”³³ 304 entries eventually made up this mail art project. From the beginning, Francis Van Maele was clearly successful in inviting a geographically and culturally diverse array of artists, ranging from Argentina to Yugoslavia. He encouraged other artists from around the world to imagine a country that is unlike their own and in any medium they choose – making their artistic world more about engaging with one other on a level that transcends national boundaries. In a sense, at its core, this is what mail art and its history is about.

Mail art is an artistic practice born out of Fluxus, specifically at Ray Johnson’s New York

Correspondence School in the early 1960s.³⁴ In Clive Phillpot's essay, "The Mailed Art of Ray Johnson," he describes Johnson as the "father of mail art."³⁵ He continues by stating: "a history of mail art can be cobbled together to give its ancestors, connections of the past, or to validate it. People's desire for time-blessed roots is strange and strong. The Futurists and Dada artists are often dragged in as progenitors for mail art, but until Ray Johnson developed it as a distinct verbal-visual activity, from his early beginnings in the mid-forties, mail art was incidental and [did] not warrant separate treatment as a distinct form of art."³⁶ Phillpot clearly touches on the anti-historical tendencies of Fluxus and reasons for such tendencies, but instead of subscribing it to Fluxus proper, mail art becomes the key focus for some artists and scholars. Ferranto echoes this sentiment in his essay, "International Mail Art Archives, 2000: The Museum in the Mailbox," when he remarks: "[W]riting a history denotes a process of allowing some few to speak while many remain silent. The premise of mail art implies the opposite, that each voice is heard in relation to every other, and that meaning only resides in the dialogue between voices."³⁷ For many, mail art is unique in this way because it is a collaborative effort of many artists from diverse locations around the globe. When one artist or, in the case of Franticham, a couple of artists imagine a specific topic or subject of a mail art project, they facilitate a mail art project by putting out a call and inviting artists to use the Postal Service to mail them their work. Once the deadline is reached, there is a wide array of contributions. A key component to the ideas inherent in mail art is that every work submitted must be used and displayed if it exhibited, no matter whether it pertains exactly to the specified topic. Clive Phillpot iterates this argument when he laments the needs of academia to historicize and standardize art:

Thus, the principle of public manifestation of the academy, the mail art exhibition, is

conducted according to standard operating procedures. Anyone may announce and organize such an exhibition, and decide upon a theme, but every work submitted must be exhibited, and each participant must receive a record of the complete exhibition, whether a simple checklist, address, list catalog, or booklet.³⁸

In this sense, mail art can be seen as a practice of inclusion that is unmediated by hegemonic forces of the conventional art world. There are no legendary curators, world-renowned collectors, or popular artists involved in mail art projects. It is a devoted group of people, separated only by distance but brought together by ideas and passions for making small-scale and sometimes eccentric works. Certainly, Red Fox Press has put together some important and puzzling mail art projects of their own, such as “Salt & Pepper” (2007-2008) in which they ask artists to mail works that represent “the spice of life” (Fig. 4). Also, while the Fluxus and mail artists of the past attempted to push away from intellectual weight in their works, Franticham has been the catalyst for works that take up issues of semiotics, such as their mail project “The Fish” (2006-2007) (Fig. 5). This project called for artists to send in “one or more fishes” to Franticham because they are symbols of many things and have an attachment to the home of Red Fox Press. They even provided a descriptive poem in their call that seems to echo the socio-poetic nature of mail art:

As only water separates us, the fish has become our symbol of missing and longing,
of desperation and hope, of love, desire and union.

Frantic lives just meters away from the Atlantic
and stares day in, day out at the horizon of the ocean.
Antic-ham, when walking along her river in Seoul
can feel the wind coming from the west,
and hear the message of the fish.
Soon both will become fish and unite in the waters.

Already in early religions, the fish was a symbol of desire, union and fecundity,
as well as a symbol of the power of the female sexuality,
thru a multitude of goddesses with fish symbols,
or mermaids, nymphs and water spirits.³⁹

Franticham creates publications that attempt to not only reach out to participants in their global artistic circle; they also reach out through poignant works of art to those who may not be so familiar with the ideological tradition that inspires them. Craig Saper discusses the ideological origins of mail art and its transnationalism in his essay, “Fluxus as a Laboratory,” where he describes Robert Filliou’s art installation, *Territory 2 of the General Republic*, in terms of an “eternal network” that “describe[s] the inability of any one individual to know everything in a single field” and “[t]he term later adopted by the mail-art community to describe their socio-poetic project. They did not see the connection between the end of the coverage model of scholarship and learning, but they saw in Filliou’s phrase the possibility of forming their own virtual territory. It is the geopolitical, and doubly geo-*graphic*, metaphor that attracted mail artists.”⁴⁰ This specific example by Saper discusses a genesis story for a particular way of mail art thought. Therefore, examples of mail art facilitated by Red Fox Press may demonstrate the beginnings of post-Fluxus thought. For instance, in his first mail art project, Van Maele used an ideological model from the 1960s and exhibited “Ireland Today” in four locations – two libraries, a college, and a pop-up gallery on Achill Island (Fig. 6).⁴¹ Through this example, an engagement between the artists and the academic world is discernable, something that Saper seems to argue was not the case for the mid-twentieth century mail artists. Additionally, judging by the four exhibition dates that only lasted for around twelve days at a time, Van Maele was invested in getting this project out and engaging with the general public, something else that past – and arguably current – mail artists are not interested in. Ferranto even references the

confrontational, almost elitist attitudes of some mail artists who work exclusively in the tradition when he discusses (with Ken Friedman in mind) the problems of the mail art medium:

Much of the basis for this discrepancy lies with mail artists themselves. For them intellectual inquiry and scholarship is often deemed contrary to the essential spirit of the medium. As Ken Friedman notes, ‘mail artists often claim to seek broad public discourse (but they have) little tolerance for differences of opinion, style, or culture.’ Many mail artists react with hostility to probing inquires.⁴²

While these views may be subjective in some ways, they suggest not only the disdain for history by artists in this tradition, but a model for the practices of Franticham and Red Fox Press.

This opportunity to compare and contrast these past traditions to practices in the early part of the twenty-first century thus allows us to look at the artistic practices of Red Fox Press critically and assert that it is not simply a continuation of Fluxus and mail art practices but a post-Fluxus mode of working – a mode that looks to the past but that does its work differently given the contemporary circumstances and interests of the Press.

Part Three: Red Fox Press as a Site of Post-Fluxus Artistic Practices

“Because we’ve never intended to be high art. We came out to be like a bunch of jokers.”

- George Maciunas⁴³

The nascent days of Fluxus in the 1960s described in Part I demonstrated the true colors of the movement and what it stood for. Although Fluxus is thought to continue to this day, it supposedly has a different form than it did in the mid-twentieth century. For instance, looking at Ben Patterson’s performance piece, *Paper Piece*, at the first Festum Fluxorum Fluxus demonstrates the intentions and desires on which Fluxus was founded. George Maciunas was dedicated to creating art and living out an artistic lifestyle that was explicitly anti-art and anti-establishment. This political passion for dissent sometimes caused a rift among those in the Fluxus school of thought and artistic production. Hannah Higgins brings up this idea in reference to *Paper Piece* when she remarks: “The results were suggestive in that they indicate lasting tensions within Fluxus, tensions which have historic counterparts in, for example, 1962, which Owen Smith describes in terms of the ambivalent reactions to the famous Purge Manifesto, as well as in the debate surrounding the Fluxshoe and a number of other Fluxus events and exhibitions.”⁴⁴ From the onset, events were tumultuous in the Fluxus arena and as the years progressed, the ideas of Fluxus and looking back on its history became even more problematic - evident in Higgins’s and Friedman’s remarks on the ways in which the art world categorizes and

recounts the story of Fluxus. This reason is precisely why it is so fascinating to look at the existence of Red Fox Press and Franticham. For these artists, Fluxus is not a means to an end. Rather, it is a point of departure; a foundation that they periodically revisit but also supplant in order to make art that is uniquely their own. Therefore, Franticham and their Irish press should be seen as a “post-Fluxus” site of artistic production because they differ from traditional Fluxus – through different conceptions of technology, community, and history.

In his biography on the Red Fox Press site, Francis Van Maele claims that he “lost 10 years working as a textile engineer in an American company in Luxembourg from 1970 to 1980.”⁴⁵ While this may seem like a melodramatic way to describe a career someone possessed for a decade, it does provide insight into the mentality of Franticham. He continues this critical description into his early artistic career by stating that he made silk screen prints from 1977 until 1980, which are “luckily not available anymore.”⁴⁶ This harshness may reflect the high standards Van Maele has for his own art. More importantly, it seems to demonstrate the idealistic tendencies of Van Maele and the fact that he had, since the beginning, specific visions for the ways in which he wanted to live out his art. He started as a corporate textile engineer and in 1980 he founded Editions Phi in Luxembourg with the initial intention “to publish his own works.”⁴⁷ While Editions Phi became a leading publisher in Luxembourg, it did not seem to satisfy his artistic passions. He ended up selling the publishing company in 2001 and subsequently relocated to Achill to begin Red Fox Press. The corporate realm and the regulated uses of technology were not satisfactory for Van Maele, who wanted an unhindered environment in which he could create the artwork he desired. When he could not use the silk-screen printers to make art that was his own and when market demands prodded him to print large quantities of publications, it dissatisfied him to the point of resignation. In this context, Red Fox Press is

somewhat of a clear departure from the business oriented and technologically strict environment of the Luxembourg based “American company” and Editions Phi. Certainly, Red Fox Press is a business in the sense that they sell their publications for profit, as well as in the sense that Van Maele as his own employer at Editions Phi is identical to his situation at the Press. However, the way in which the publication company operates in a technological context is much different than his previous employments due to his ability to recognize exactly what he wanted to do – “concentrate fully on artist’s books.”⁴⁸ While the majority of Red Fox Press publications are artist books, there are also other projects that touch upon the historic context Red Fox Press is working around. “Assembling Boxes” and mail art projects are among those that have explicit historical ties to Fluxus and do not require any sort of advanced technology to create because they are done through the postal service, as was the case of various Fluxus projects in the twentieth-century. Apart from these two instances of artistic production, much of the way in which Franticham conduct the operations of their Press do not reflect the essential spirit of Fluxus due to the various uses of contemporary technology and the artwork they produce with it.

Fluxus artists of the twentieth-century obviously used some of the same printing technologies and book binding techniques as Franticham to produce works, and early Fluxus publications reflect the various Red Fox Press publications. In 1962, George Maciunas wanted to begin “Fluxus Yearbooks” which contained “scores and essays intended to be traditionally printed and bound, but also listed were a number of additional elements – fold-outs, inserts, records, and even some [other] objects.”⁴⁹ The following spring, Maciunas began creating not only books but also “Fluxus Yearbook-Boxes” which are similar to the “Assembling Boxes” of Franticham. So in this way, the works of Red Fox Press are tied to that of Fluxus through the creation of similar artwork by similar techniques and technologies. In order for a “Fluxus

Yearbook” to be possible in 1962, artists would have to mail their works to Maciunas, who previously circulated a call for works. Franticham also puts out a call for works for their “Assembling Boxes” and the other artists’ books they produce, but they do so on their website, redfoxpress.com. Of course, Fluxus artists in the 1960s did not exactly have a chance to take advantage of the Internet in order to facilitate their art, and it could be said that Franticham is simply continuing the traditions of Fluxus in a contemporary manner. This is not the case, however. Franticham and their Red Fox Press almost exclusively use the Internet to conduct their artistic practices and run their publishing business. They put their call for submissions on the page of the specific work and explicitly state that projects are “on invitation only.” The way in which they communicate with other artists around the world becomes exclusively virtual and technologically based. For instance, John Bennett, the former curator of the Avant Writing Collection in Thompson Library at The Ohio State University, has collected a few “Assembling Boxes” and artists’ books by Red Fox Press. He knows Francis Van Maele and Antic-Ham and they have included his own work in boxes and in Fluxus inspired books, but they have never met in person. Bennett actually has his own publication label, Luna Bisonte Press, which he uses to publish his own visual poetry and poetry of other artists that create art in a manner that reflects Fluxus, specifically their eccentric and experimental structures. This practice contrasts with Red Fox Press because they do not exclusively publish artist books that use the historical conventions made popular by Fluxus. Their work is varied in the sense that they interact with contemporary Fluxus artists and create artwork inspired by such practices, while simultaneously creating work that is representative of a personal vision.

The community that surrounds Fluxus today is a global one and it is almost entirely facilitated by technology. Unlike the height of Fluxus in the 1960s where artists were constantly

visiting each other for various performances or happenings, the artists that Franticham surrounds themselves with generally keep to themselves and only collaborate virtually or through the postal service. Instead of meeting for a performance in SoHo, Fluxus artists today meet each other through the Internet, mail art exhibitions, or “Fluxfests.” This contemporary version of how Fluxus artists meet and mingle even contrasts with Franticham who do not participate in Fluxus centered events or exhibitions. As their story suggests, they met at a book fair in Seoul. For them, book fairs are the new happenings. They can show their Fluxus inspired publications but they do not have to be completely enveloped within the Fluxus mindset. At book fairs, and even at their relatively secluded cottage, they can create their own work that demonstrates their own artistic expressions, which may have absolutely nothing to do with the traditions of Fluxus.

At this point, an important distinction needs to be made between Franticham and those with which they associate. Franticham and their Red Fox Press are an example of a “post-Fluxus” artistic practice, but that does not necessarily mean Fluxus is dead. Rather, some artists such as John Bennett are still considered regular Fluxus artists since they still make art that is nostalgic or imagines the movement as continuing on today. Franticham, on the other hand, do not imagine themselves as Fluxus artists in the twenty-first century. Rather, they are “post-Fluxus” artists due to the ways in which they exclusively rely on their website and email to conduct their artistic business, using techniques that can be found in Fluxus traditions for their own personalized and culturally specific artistic expression. Unlike the Fluxus artists today who perform in a way that reminisces and attempts to emulate the height of the movement, who annually attend “Fluxfests” in Chicago, and who create nonsensical works that would even make Maciunas proud, Franticham engages with Fluxus but do not let their influences pin them to one way of creating art.

For example, Franticham has been utilizing the Polaroid camera since 2011 as a tool to create and sell art. They call these projects “Franticham’s Impossible Polaroid Madness.” Besides being able to purchase actual Polaroid cameras, film, and accessories directly from Franticham, they also make books that are made up of their Polaroid photographs. “Re-Connection” (Fig. 7) is a specific project that is a collection of “photographs of parallel situations in Seoul and in Achill.”⁵⁰ Even from this specific example from one of their many artistic practices, it is clear that Franticham views their work under Red Fox Press as something very uniquely their own and no one else. Much of their art consists of their own experiences and viewers connect with this because it is a touching and passionate story of two lovers who find themselves separated at points in time but eventually unite in a romantic way. This type of narrative is nowhere to be found within Fluxus art, which tends to be much more playful and joke-filled. Antic-ham and Francis Van Maele assert their own artistic visions within their publications – even in the projects that rely on submissions by other artists.

Red Fox Press publications that incorporate a network of artists to produce a project specify the topics on their site. This could be read as their version of what the “score” meant for Fluxus artists. For Fluxus the score was one of the central aspects of their artistic lifestyle. This is because it allowed for variation and experimentation. In her interview about Fluxus practice with Sarah Schultz for the Walker Art Center, art historian Natilee Harren states:

[I]f we look at the main modes of Fluxus production – performance and multiples – it becomes clear that the common denominator of Fluxus practice was a reliance on scores and other forms of instruction. And that implies a production that was process-oriented, iterative, and often delegated. A Fluxus work almost always entails multiple realizations

and therefore multiple authors, performers, and audiences.⁵¹

Here, Harren's description of why Fluxus values scores helps us understand how and why Red Fox Press employs instruction in their publications.

The only instances in which instruction and the notion of score is relevant in Red Fox Press work is in their "Assembling Boxes," artist books, and mail art projects. The "Assembling Boxes" do not even specify a theme that artists have to adhere to; it is simply an invitation to submit anything the artist wishes to create. In one way, these boxes do represent an experimental sense that Fluxus prided itself in. In their mail art projects, Franticham does give specific themes from which artists send in their interpretation of the topic (as we discussed towards the end of Part II). Although Red Fox Press publications seem to value the score and delegating instructions to artists, it is not their primary form of artistic practice as it was for Fluxus artists. It seems as though some scholars and artists would like to think that Franticham is working exclusively in this Fluxus context, as most collections that acquire their work seem only to acquire their works that specifically reference Fluxus, such as the "Assembling Boxes" and the "C'est Mon Dada" artists books. However, as previously mentioned, these publications are not even close to the majority of Red Fox Press works; they do not completely reflect what Franticham values or what makes them an example of a "post-Fluxus" practice.

As Natilee Harren has mentioned along with many scholars cited earlier, Fluxus was centered around group projects and connections between people. This is due to the fact that Fluxus artists wanted to coalesce life and art. If a score told them to perform a dance during their daily routine (as Ken Friedman instructed in 1973) or told you to pick up anything at your feet to make it a sculpture (as Ben Vautier suggested in 1967), a blending between art and life occurs.

As David T. Doris points out in his essay, “Zen Vaudeville,” a Fluxus artists problematically attempted to call “*everything* art.”⁵² While Franticham seems to find importance within the community and facilitate projects that emphasize a global community of artists with similar values, they do not work in this mode exclusively. This goes back to the technological aspect of Franticham’s practices as well. They attempt to create a sense of a lifestyle through their artistic practices by including friends and scholars who are artists in their publications, but once the link to purchase the work goes up on their site, it becomes more than just a life of art making. It is becoming a matter of sustainability and practicality, which is not something Fluxus valued early on. In the same sense, Fluxus scores were open for anyone to interpret and perform in their own artistic manner. The vast majority of Franticham work focuses on the artists themselves and is self-reflective. Interpretation is a secondary action by the viewer, after the true performance is played out between between Van Maele and Antic-Ham. Therefore, for Franticham, community is more of a peripheral value, one that they come back to periodically, even if it is not part of the core climate in which they produce art. It is important to note this distinction between their publications that display a sense of community and works that focus exclusively on the artists themselves.

One such book that Franticham has created that demonstrates this primary focus on themselves as performers and embodiments of meaning (besides the “Re-Connection” publication mentioned above), is their “best-seller” “Objects of You” (Fig. 8). It is a forty-page collection of drawings of objects by Antic-Ham and Van Maele. Much of their art reflects upon their relationship together and *Objects of You* is no exception. The original date “Objects of You” was printed was in 2007, and there was a second and third printing in 2010 and 2014 – there were sixty-nine signed copies of the publication printed in each printing. The book, like

most of their publications, is modest in size – an A6 paper format or 4 x 6 inches. The cover is cardboard, the binding is made up of thread and quarter cloth, and the drawings are laser printed onto ivory paper. These forty drawings are of objects in Seoul and on Achill Island. Each artist's drawings alternate every page, allowing the reader to compare and contrast their distinct stylistic tendencies and motifs. Van Maele's drawings are more monotone and neat, while Antic-Ham values the use of color and playfulness. Where they both come together is their fixation on the sensuous nature of the objects and how each object makes them feel on a very deep and personal level. Books like these have nothing to do with Fluxus and show that, unlike the artists in the 1960s or John Bennett and contemporary Fluxus artists who almost solely work in the Fluxus lineage, Franticham are more than just a continuation of that specific artistic lifestyle.

The projects that utilize their global networks and connections are the works that are stamped with "Franticham's Fluxus Island." For Franticham, they recognize that they are influenced by Fluxus (and even Dada) and use their core ideologies in order to create art that is true to these traditions. Even by looking at the terminology Franticham uses on their site, they do not claim to make Fluxus art, only suggesting they are making art and facilitating art that is "in the spirit of Dada or Fluxus."⁵³ This description is found specifically on their "C'est mon dada" page, which has just as much to do with community as it does recognizing the history that makes these publications possible.

In "C'est Mon Dada," Franticham's historical perspective shines through and demonstrates further its "post-Fluxus" practices. Due to the fact that Red Fox Press is producing and working in such a different global and technological climate than Fluxus was in the 1960s, the artwork and its impact are going to be much different. Their attempt to synthesize two very problematic artistic periods – in terms of their anti-art and anti-historical stances – and to express the

influences on them as artists in singular art pieces seems to be another example as to why these artists are working in a post-Fluxus mode. These specific community-centered works that Red Fox Press facilitates embody a complicated and multi-layered history because of the way they choose to be influenced by and depart from the tradition of their predecessors.

There are currently one hundred and four “C’est mon dada” publications and the majority of these books contain artwork by one or two other artists beside Francis Van Maele or Antic-Ham that represent what Fluxus means to them aesthetically and ideologically. For instance, “C For Brecht” (Fig. 9) is the twenty-fifth contribution to the anthology by George Brecht and edited by Les Coleman. This specific book includes texts and postcards Coleman collected from George Brecht – a leading Fluxus artist in the 1960s. Coleman writes in his artist statement for this book: “Early in 1982 I wrote to George Brecht, with whom I was in intermittent contact, suggesting the idea that I might edit a small anthology of his scattered contributions to journals and magazines.”⁵⁴ Coleman continues, “I have never met, or spoken, with George but over the years our occasional correspondence has continued.”⁵⁵ Similar to how John Bennett remarked that he has a relationship with and worked alongside Francis Van Maele but they have never actually met, Coleman makes this same sentiment here. The book displays small illustrations by Brecht that demonstrate his ideas of Fluxus. Coleman also displays Brecht’s legacy not only in a personal sense but in a broader sense that shows what his work means for artists who work in the Fluxus mode today.

“C for Brecht” is unlike most of the publications in this series because it does not showcase artwork by a contemporary artist but displays artwork by a founding father of Fluxus art and thought. In this way, it is historically grounded. Certainly, the other publications are grounded in history because artists demonstrate their contemporary Fluxus practices. The only other book in

the series that directly muses on the Fluxus of the past is Franticham's own book, "Franticham's Fluxus Island" (Fig. 10). Made in 2009, "Franticham's Fluxus Island" contains twenty-two laser printed drawings that were made "à la manière de" John Cage, George Maciunas, Yoko Ono, Ken Friedman, George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Ray Johnson, Nam June Paik, and Ben Vautier – the core members of the early Fluxus movement.⁵⁶ It is necessary to understand that Franticham did not choose to create unique artworks to demonstrate what Fluxus means to them in a contemporary context. Rather, they look back to and utilize the various styles of the most noteworthy members in the 1960s. They do not attempt to demonstrate how Fluxus has changed or evolved over time but how they can create works in the same style as artists that inspire them. Additionally, towards the end of the book Franticham attempts to explain the key characteristics of Fluxus, but in an anti-historical fashion that early Fluxus artists would enjoy. In the last few pages, Franticham provides a basic definition of Fluxus. When read, it is a comprehensive and understandable definition, but once the reader reaches the end of the page, the source of the definition is given as "Wikipedia." This tongue-in-cheek gesture has a two-fold meaning. First, it echoes the Fluxus sentimentality of anti-historicization and highlights the rudimentary treatment of complex ideas by history. It also seems to demonstrate that the essence of Fluxus can now be easily obtained from the Internet, which in turn renders it as a simple and monolithic historical moment – as opposed to an ever-changing entity. In this sense, this book is more of a history lesson or an opportunity for Franticham to exhibit their complete understanding or even mastery of the twentieth-century Fluxus aesthetic. On the page where one can order this specific book, they explain why they claim to live on a "Fluxus Island":

Why Fluxus Island?

Franticham (Francis Van Maele and Antic-Ham) live on an island on the west coast of Ireland.

This edition was made in their studios overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

George Maciunas' dream was to purchase an island and have
all fluxus members working and performing there.

Here is the island he was looking for...in the Europe he liked,
and geographically the nearest one to his hometown New York.⁵⁷

Initially, this explanation may seem to state that Franticham are fulfilling or carrying out the dream of Fluxus. However, in conjunction with the actual content of the publication, this statement should be read as demonstrating a sense of dominance over the traditions of the past. Franticham founded Red Fox Press on a picturesque island off the coast of Ireland – something that Maciunas apparently wished to do, even though he ended up confining himself to the concrete jungle of New York City for his entire life. In this way, Franticham has “mastered” not only the aesthetics of Fluxus but the philosophies of the movement as well. The work of Red Fox Press is not a continuation of Fluxus or it does not necessarily “belong to” Fluxus, but it is an embodiment of an artistic practice that wholly and intuitively understands its roots and moves to create a legacy all their own. Therefore, Red Fox Press is an example of a “post-Fluxus” artistic community; judging by their ideas of the “Fluxus Island,” they are the harbingers of a new wave or a new branch of artistic practice.

Clearly, these specific practices and issues that surround Franticham’s Red Fox Press heavily intersect with one another. Seen within Red Fox Press, these contemporary artistic practices traverse a multitude of characteristics that center around technology, community, and history. These categories are not exclusive to the contemporary art world, but the ways in which they manifest today are unique to the twenty-first century. Judith Rodenbeck focuses on this topic of contemporary artistic collectivism while also recognizing that community, history, and technology are intertwined with one another. In her essay, “Working to Learn Together: Failure as Tactic,” Rodenbeck describes these contemporary artistic communities by remarking:

Their extraordinary degree of interlinkage, accomplished via epistolary exchanges, residencies, co-presence at public forums, and, perhaps most crucially, the dissemination, cross-posting, and cross-referencing of information and argument enabled by the worldwide web, is constantly enhanced through the practical deployment of current and emergent communications technologies, putting into play the tensions between the local and the dispersed or nominally global, the material and the virtual. Importantly, too, these two aspects imply a third: the discursive cross-pollination evidences a complex dialogical network that produces, at its most finely articulated moments, a sociability that is both theorized and enacted. This strategic set of tensions presents not only a ‘problem’ for art historians, of course: it is also a problem for curators, critics, educators, even artists – indeed to whole panoply of job descriptions that make up what Arthur Danto calls the art world.⁵⁸

In this lengthy and complex quotation, Rodenbeck recognizes the multi-faceted ways in which contemporary artistic groups create their own identity through the community itself, the manipulation of technology, and the recognition and simultaneous complication of history. Red Fox Press certainly fits within the categories of the contemporary artistic collectivist attitudes that Rodenbeck brings forth, but they have a unique position in this broader category of the art world due to the fact that they exist next to the traditions of Fluxus – a foundationally subversive artistic movement. Fluxus also seems to fit within the characteristics Rodenbeck lists here, and she recognizes that it is not just a contemporary phenomenon and that there are historic precedents to these spaces of thought. Rodenbeck even mentions this when she states that

“groups like Fluxus, Hi Red Center, the Feminist Art Project, and others had already begun mining alternative strategies not only of production and delivery but also of conception, emphasizing process, iterability, and the dialectic of homogeneity and heteronomy, materializing, to borrow a phrase from Umberto Eco, the ‘work in movement.’”⁵⁹ Fluxus is an embodiment of this description and the crux of the artwork they produce is work that is constantly unfinished, shifting, and moving. Red Fox Press is a concrete contemporary example of Rodenbeck’s categorization. Where Franticham and their Press deviates from these specific artistic categories is that they only go through with these practices to a certain point. Rodenbeck’s descriptions relate to the “Assembling Boxes,” “C’est mon dada” volumes, and mail art projects because they are multiplying and are technically works in movement that demonstrate a connection to a global community of artists through the use of writing and the world wide web.

Rodenbeck’s paradigm no longer rings true, however, when considering the rest of Franticham’s *œuvre*, which is not completely homogenous or ruled by a singular way of thought. Rather, they place emphasis on each other, their personal passions, and their deep connections with their own geographical locations; which coexist alongside but are not entrapped by an interest in other artistic movements. Above all, this is what makes them examples of “post-Fluxus” practice. Their ability to be artists of their own accord and their ability to be within and outside of a Fluxus inspired mode of production concurrently is what makes Red Fox Press a “post-Fluxus” artistic practice.

Conclusion

In her essay in which she explores the relations and hypocrisy that existed between the discourse that Hegel and others created and the Saint-Domingue Revolution, Susan Buck-Morss notices an important lesson that we can learn from rethinking historical precedents. She remarks: “‘Hegel and Haiti’ supports a shift in knowledge away from traditional hierarchies of significance. It insists that facts are important not as data with fixed meanings, but as connective pathways that can continue to surprise us. Facts should inspire imagination rather than tying it down”⁶⁰ (Buck-Morss, 13). This project attempts to address a similar sentiment in terms of how we consider and deal with art historical movements that are purposefully troublesome and enigmatic in nature. Franticham tames the tumultuous Fluxus and harnesses its creative powers to make things that are uniquely their own. Franticham and all that they do allows us to think of artistic movements in a more nuanced way and not simply accept the facts provided by history. Fluxus was founded on principles of experimentation and change. This has allowed for the continuation of their ideologies and practices through major cultural shifts. However, I do not believe they foresaw that artists could use their models in order to create an original artistic practice that better suits the individual inspired by the mystical Fluxus paradigm. Francis Van Maele, Antic-Ham, and their Red Fox Press certainly are these artists that George Maciunas and others in the 1960s did not think about. Rather than being a continuation of this tradition, Franticham has become something greater beyond the Fluxus paradigm. However, history is recursive in many ways. Not dissimilar from Fluxus artists who separated themselves from Dada,

Franticham may have repeated this historical separation by being inspired by Fluxus, even as they simultaneously look more to the present and future in order to create their own “post-Fluxus” path.

Notes

1. Giovanni Carandente in “Presentazione” as quoted in Hannah Higgins, “Fluxus Fortuna” In *The Fluxus Reader*, edited by Ken Friedman (London: Academy Editions, 1998), 39.
2. Ken Friedman, “Introduction: A Transformative Vision of Fluxus.” In *The Fluxus Reader*, edited by Ken Friedman (London, England: Academy Editions, 1998), x.
3. Owen Smith, “Developing A Fluxible Forum: Early Performance and Publishing.” In *The Fluxus Reader*, edited by Ken Friedman (London: Academy Editions, 1998), 3.
4. Friedman, “Introduction,” viii.
5. “Anti-Art,” *Tate*, February 21, 2016,
<http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/onlineresources/glossary/a/anti-art>.
6. Marcel Duchamp, “Marcel Duchamp 1887-1968,” *Dadaart: Marcel Duchamp, in The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1946*, February 21, 2016, <http://www.dadart.com/dadaism/dada/035a-duchamp-cage.html>.
7. Smith, “Developing A Fluxible Forum,” 4-5.
8. Ken Friedman, “Fluxus and Company.” In *The Fluxus Reader*, edited by Ken Friedman. (London: Academy Editions, 1998), 243.
9. Higgins, “Fluxus Fortuna,” 38.
10. Ibid., 39.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 43.
14. Ibid., 33.
15. Ibid., 33-34.

16. Ibid., 34.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Craig Saper, "Fluxus As a Laboratory." In *The Fluxus Reader*, edited by Ken Friedman, (London: Academy Editions, 1998),146.
21. Ibid.
22. Friedman, "Fluxus and Company," 255.
23. Ibid.
24. Dick Higgins, "Fluxus Portal for the Internet," *Fluxus Portal*, January 31, 2016.
<http://www.fluxus.org/>.
25. Friedman, "Introduction," ix.
26. Francis Van Maele, "About RedFoxPress" *Red Fox Press*,
<http://www.redfoxpress.com/me.html>.
27. Hannah Higgins, "Transnationalisms of Fluxus" In *Not the Other Avant-Garde: The Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance*, edited by James M. Harding and John Rouse, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 272.
28. "Islands - Change in Population 1841-2011," *Ireland's Islands*, Published 2011,
<http://irishislands.info/census/graphs/numbers.html>.
29. Smith, "Developing a Fluxible Forum," 12
30. Ibid., 14.
31. Stephen C. Foster, "Historical Design and Social Purpose: A Note on the Relationship of Fluxus to Modernism." In *The Fluxus Reader*, edited by Ken Friedman, (London: Academy

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32. "C'est Mon Dada," *Red Fox Press*, <http://www.redfoxpress.com/dada.html>.

33. "Mail Art Call Ireland Today," *Red Fox Press*, <http://www.redfoxpress.com/ireland.html>.

34. Matt Ferranto, "International Mail Art Archives, 2000: The Museum in the Mailbox," *International Mail Art Archives*, http://www.spareroom.org/mailart/arch_ess.html.

35. Clive Phillpot, "The Mailed Art of Ray Johnson," In *Eternal Network: A Mail Art Anthology*, edited by Chuck Welch (Canada: University of Calgary Press, 1995). 3-4.

36. Ibid.

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38. Phillpot, "The Mailed Art of Ray Johnson".

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48. Ibid.

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50. "Re-Connection," *Franticham's Polaroid Madness*,

<http://www.polamad.com/polaroidreconnection.html>.

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53. "C'est Mon Dada," *Red Fox Press*, <http://www.redfoxpress.com/dada.html>.

54. Les Coleman, "C for Brecht," *Red Fox Press*, <http://www.redfoxpress.com/dada-brecht.html>.

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56. Franticham, "Franticham's Fluxus Island," *Red Fox Press*,

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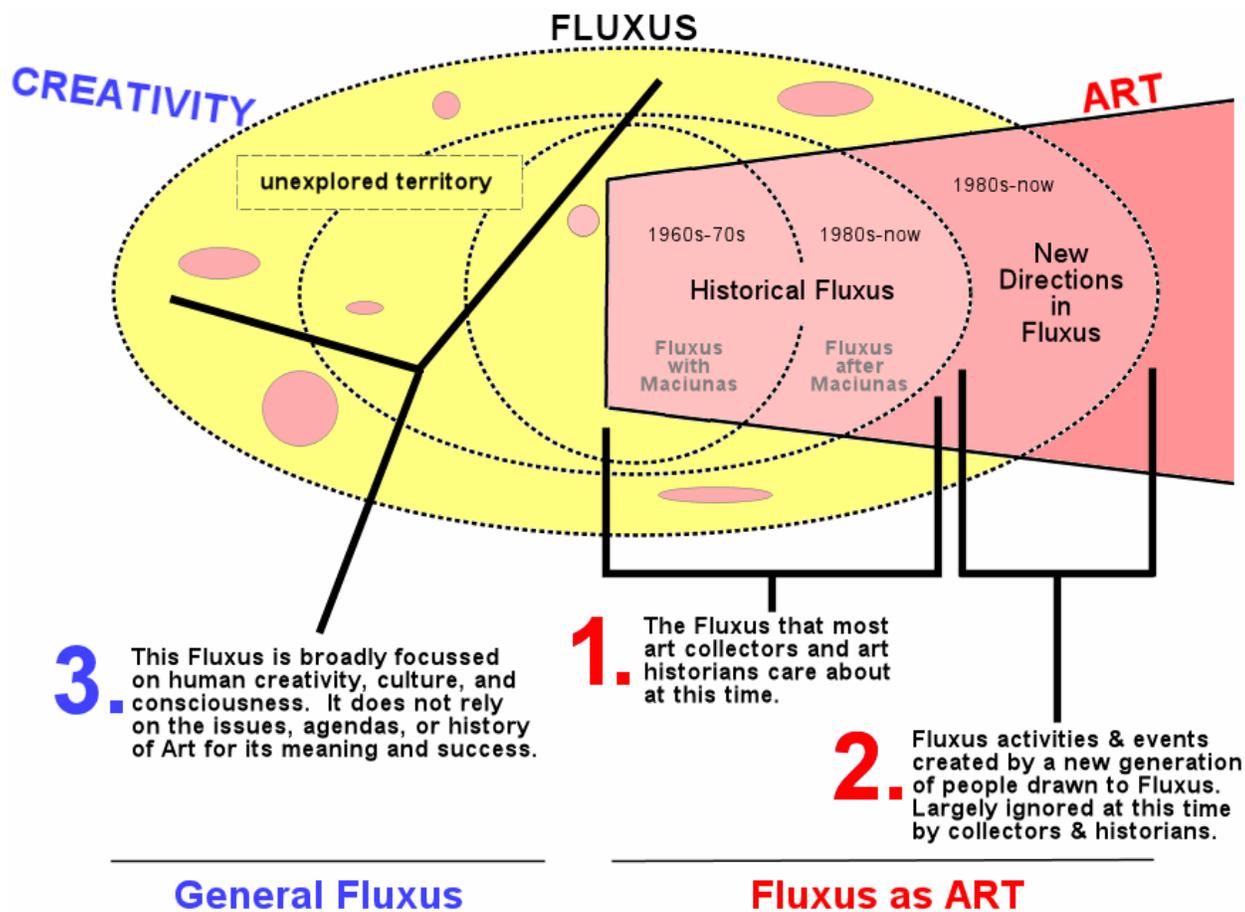
59. Rodenbeck, "Working to Learn Together," 163.

60. Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 13.

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(Fig. 1) Fluxus Diagram. www.fluxusportal.org



(Fig. 2) Red Fox Press studio.
Dugort, Achill Island, Ireland
(<http://www.redfoxpress.com/mainabout.html>)

(Fig. 3) Franticham's "Assembling Boxes" with the "Franticham's Fluxus Island" stamp.
<http://www.redfoxpress.com/ass.box.html>

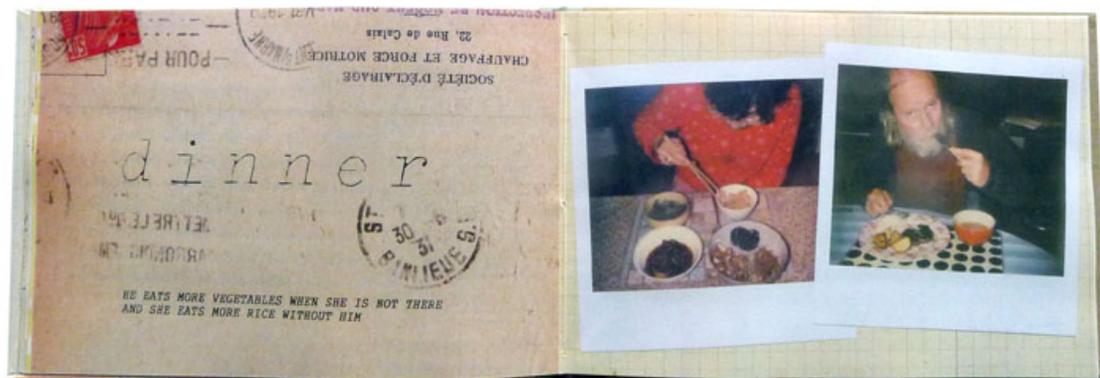


(Fig. 4) Franticham's "Salt & Pepper" mail art project.
<http://www.redfoxpress.com/salt.html>

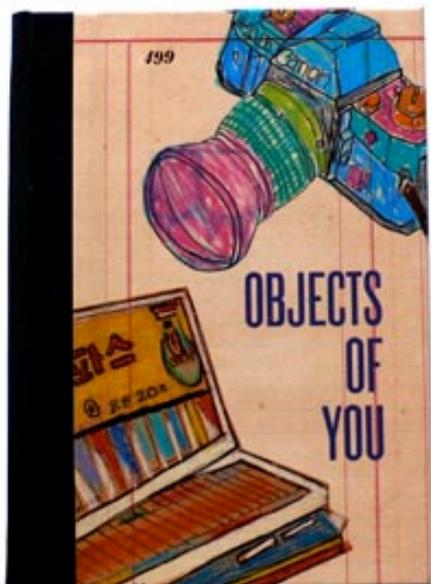
(Fig. 5) Franticham's "The Fish" mail art project.
<http://www.redfoxpress.com/fish.html>



(Fig. 6) Franticham's pop up gallery for "Ireland Today" mail art project.
<http://www.redfoxpress.com/ireland.html>

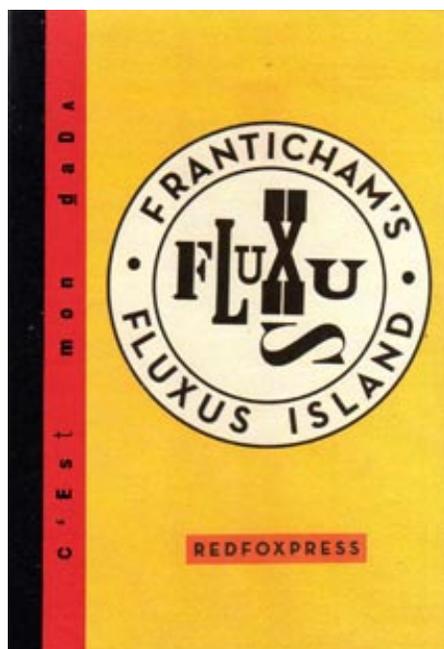
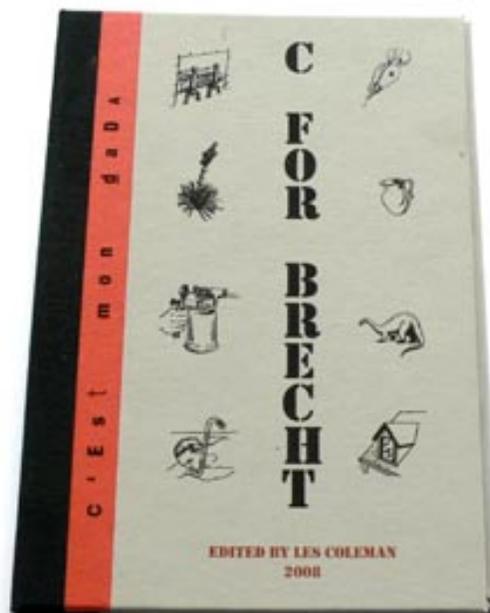


(Fig. 7) Franticham's Polaroid work *Re-Connection*.
<http://www.polamad.com/polaroidreconnection.html>



(Fig. 8) *Objects of You* by Franticham
(<http://www.redfoxpress.com/FH-objects.html>)

(Fig. 9) *C for Brecht*, drawing by George Brecht, edited by Les Coleman.
<http://www.redfoxpress.com/dada-brecht.html>



(Fig. 10) *Franticham's Fluxus Island* by Franticham in the "C'est mon dada" series.
<http://www.redfoxpress.com/dada-island.html>.

