Dick Higgins Collection 1958-2002
Size of the Collection: 17.5 linear feet
Accession Number: 1999.23
Records Created by: Dick Higgins

Short Description of Collection:

The Dick Higgins Collection showcases Higgins’s influence on the Fluxus movement through his artwork and publishing house, Something Else Press. The Fluxus movement embraced Higgins’s idea of “intermedia,” the description of art that would “fall between” traditional separations of media and artforms, incorporating multiple or overlapping media in one piece. Higgins’s embraced this idea and went on to create performance pieces such as Happenings and Danger Music; visual, concrete, and pattern poetry; mail art; prints and paintings; as well as his publication work through Something Else Press, all of which are represented in this collection. Donated from Dick Higgins’s studio by his wife Alison Knowles, the collection focuses on Higgins, Something Else Press, and the wider Fluxus movement. Over 50 individual Fluxus artists are represented through published texts, limited edition prints, and sound collections.

Selected Search Terms:
Dick Higgins
Alison Knowles
Ken Friedman
Allan Kaprow
Emmett Williams
George Brecht
George Maciunas
John Cage
Fluxus
Intermedia
Something Else Press
Unpublished Editions
Printed Editions
Happenings
Danger Music
Visual Poetry
Mail Art

Languages:
English
Finding Aid for the Dick Higgins Collection
Albin O. Kuhn Library & Gallery, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Spanish
German
French
Italian
Yiddish
Biographical Note

Short Biography:

Dick (Richard Carter) Higgins (1938-1998) is best known as a co-founding member of the Fluxus art movement in the 1960s. Embracing the fluidity and boundary-crossing nature of art, Higgins introduced the concept of “intermedia” in 1965 and spent the next 30 years creating artwork in the areas of performance art (Happenings), musical composition, concrete and pattern poetry, painting, and theoretical writings in scholarly and personal publications. He operated three successful specialized publishing companies: Something Else Press (1964-1974), Unpublished Editions (1972-1978), which was later renamed Printed Editions (1978-1985). Higgins was a student of John Cage and a contemporary of George Maciunas, George Brecht, Al Hansen, Ray Johnson, Yoko Ono, LaMonte Young, and Alison Knowles, whom he married (twice) and raised two children, Hannah and Jessica.

Timeline:

March 15, 1938 – Born in Jesus Pieces, England to Katharine (Bigelow) and Carter Chapin Higgins, heir to Worchester Pressed Steel in Worchester, Massachusetts.

1955 – Graduated from Saint Paul’s School in Concord, New Hampshire.

1957 – Dropped out of Yale University.


1960 – Graduated from Columbia School of General Studies.

1960 – Married Alison Knowles (b. 1933), a fellow member of the Fluxus art movement.

1961 – Fluxus movement develops, primarily in New York City and Germany.

1962 – Completed Danger Music Number Seventeen.

1964 – Daughters Hannah and Jessica born.

1964 – Established Something Else Press

1964 – Published Jefferson’s Birthday/Postface (Something Else Press).

1965 – Published the seminal essay, “Intermedia,” in the Something Else Newsletter. This essay explains Higgins’s position on his preference for artwork that overlapped the boundaries imposed on art formats. The term and idea of...
intermedia, though revolutionary at the time, is now widely accepted and may also be called “multimedia.”

1966 – Published *Manifestos* (Something Else Press) with co-editor Emmett Williams.

1968 – *A Thousand Symphonies* is published.

1969 – Published *foew&ombwhnw* (Something Else Press).

1970 – Divorced Alison Knowles.

1971 – Published *Fantastic Architecture* (Something Else Press) with co-editor Wolf Vostell.


1972 – Moved to West Glover, Vermont.
   Established Unpublished Editions.
   Published *A Book About Love & War & Death* (Something Else Press).

1973 – Began work on what would grow to become *7.7.73*, a collection of over one thousand prints “based on chance operations.”


1975 – Returned to New York City.
   Published *Modular Poems* (Unpublished Editions).

1977 – Received his Master’s degree in English from New York University.

   Published *A Dialectic of Centuries: Notes Towards a Theory of the New Arts* (Printed Editions).

1979 – Moved to Barrytown, New York.
   Published *Some Recent Snowflakes (and other things)* (Printed Editions).


1984 – Remarried Alison Knowles.

1986 – Published *Poems Plain & Fancy* (Station Hill Press).

1997 – Published *Modernism Since Postmodernism: Essays on Intermedia* (San Diego State University Press).

October 26, 1998 – Died in Quebec City, Canada.

1999 – Dick Higgins Collection donated to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County by Higgins’s widow, Alison Knowles.

2003 – *Intermedia*, an exhibit about Dick Higgins and the Fluxus movement, is hosted in the Albin O. Kuhn Gallery using items from the Dick Higgins Collection and private collections.
Scope and Content Note

The Dick Higgins Collection spans the years 1958 to 2002 and is 17.5 linear feet. Materials include artwork, publications, and exhibition items. Over one hundred items have been cataloged and are searchable in the USMAI catalog; like the rest of the collection materials, these publications can be viewed in the Special Collections Reading Room only.

There are four major divisions within the Dick Higgins Collection and they correspond to the official series: Dick Higgins’s artwork, publications, and exhibition materials; publications from Something Else Press; individual and collaborative artwork and publications from members of the greater Fluxus movement; and a selection of related materials from Franklin Furnace in New York City. With the exception of the ReFlux Editions items housed in Series III.B, all items were donated from Higgins’s studio by Alison Knowles. The ReFlux Editions items were purchased by the library from Printed Matter in 2002; see Series III.B container listing and the Publications section in this finding aid for a complete listing of these items.

Higgins’s own materials are located in Series I. A sampling of his own artwork is included, as well as some published works. Publications by Higgins’s that were put out by Something Else Press are located in Series II. The exhibition materials include the flier, bookmark, and catalog from Intermedia, the exhibit produced at UMBC in 2003 using items from this collection as well as privately owned holdings. Our collection of Higgins’s materials does not contain any personal papers, correspondence, or business records; please see the bibliography section for Higgins collections at other archives and institutions.

Series II contains publications from Something Else Press, the publishing house that Higgins ran from 1964 to 1973. The only non-publication materials in this series are two book covers; the business records for Something Else Press are not available in this collection. Highlights from these publications include works by George Brecht, John Cage, Allan Kaprow, Emmett Williams, Gertrude Stein, and Higgins himself.

The third and largest series contains a wide variety of artwork in the Fluxus tradition. This series is divided into two sub-series, one which contains individual artist’s works and the second which contains anthologies and collections of Fluxus artwork. Over 20 individual artists are represented in sub-series A, including George Brecht, John Cage, Ken Friedman, Alison Knowles, and Emmett Williams. Highlights from the collections in sub-series B include the Fluxus Virus Box “mini-museum” (1992), the Fluxus Anthology 30th Anniversary 1962-1992 Sound Anthology. (1992-1993), and items from the ReFlux Editions collection. The ReFlux Editions items are the only materials that were not donated from Higgins’s studio; they are housed together in Box 8.

A selection of promotional materials from Franklin Furnace in New York City is included in the fourth series. These items relate to both Higgins and the greater Fluxus movement.
Organization

The Higgins Collection has been divided into four series: I. Dick Higgins, II. Something Else Press, III. Fluxus, IV. Franklin Furnace. It is then divided into the following sub-series:

Series I - Dick Higgins: Boxes 1-2
  Sub-series:
  A. Artwork
  B. Exhibition materials
  C. Publications

Series II - Something Else Press: Box 3

Series III - Fluxus: Boxes 1, 4-8
  Sub-series:
  A. Individual Artists
  B. Collections

Series IV – Franklin Furnace: Box 9

Provenance and Acquisition Information:

This collection was donated by Alison Knowles, Higgins’s wife, in 1999. UMBC Visual Arts professor Lisa Moren assisted with the acquisition process. The materials were collected from Higgins’s studio in Barrytown, New York. Contained in the collection are items from Higgins’s personal holdings of Fluxus history and artwork, as well publications from Something Else Press, which Higgins’s ran from 1964-1973. Moren later selected additional Fluxus items for library purchase; see Series III.B, Fluxus - Collections for the ReFlux Editions items and Flux: a v tre extra, and Series III.A, Shiomi, Mieko. Events & Games.

Processing Information:

The collection was processed by Lindsey Loeper, Visiting Librarian, in the fall of 2007. Additional items were located in the summer of 2008 and the finding aid was updated to reflect these items in September 2008. A preliminary inventory had been previously been conducted in preparation for Intermedia, an exhibit showcasing Dick Higgins and Fluxus at UMBC in 2003. Lisa Moren created a website (located at http://intermedia.umbc.edu) that contains this initial inventory, information about the items, and a selection of digital images. After the Intermedia exhibit was removed, the collection materials were placed in acid free flat boxes and any original order from Higgins’s studio was not preserved. An inventory of these boxes was conducted and series designations were assigned. The materials were then rehoused according to the series. Many items required protective folders or tissue paper.

The publications from Something Else Press had been removed from the collection, cataloged, and shelved with the Special Collections General Rare Books and Book
Arts items. At the time of processing the collection it was decided that the publications should be returned and shelved with the collection boxes. There were also approximately 60 published items that were not published by Something Else Press that had remained with the collection and did not have catalog records. Catalog records were created for these items and they are shelved with the Higgins’s collection. All publications are listed on the container list in the appropriate series; please note that their location information is a call number and not a box and folder number. The publications are housed with the collection and organized by call number.
Series Description and Container List

Series I - Dick Higgins
Date: 1976-1999
Size: 63 items
Series I contains items which focus directly on Higgins’s professional career. Includes artwork made by Higgins, promotional materials relating to Higgins exhibitions (including Intermedia), and publications of Higgins’s work. This series is arranged chronologically. The best effort has been made to house items in numerically sequential boxes but due to the irregularity of the item sizes this was not always possible; please note the box, folder, or call number listed when requesting an item. Publications from Something Else Press are located in Series II. All items are from Higgins’s personal studio.

Sub-series A - Artwork
Size: 8 folders, 40 items
These items are prints or originals of artwork done by Dick Higgins.

Box 1 Folder 1 “The Thousand Symphonies” [sheet music, typeset note, 13 items] (1967)
Box 1 Folder 2 Untitled (Signed Performance) [silk-screened, mounted napkin] (1970)
Box 1 Folder 3 "Five Traditions of Art History, an Essay" [poster]. (1976)
Box 1 Folder 4 “Some Poetry Intermedia” [poster]. (1976)
Box 1 Folder 5 Production Materials for “The Nature of Fish” [camera ready artwork, handwritten sheet, 5 items] (1977)
Box 1 Folder 6 “The Nature of Fish” [offset printed concrete poem, 3 items] (1978)
Box 1 Folder 7 For “The Nature of Fish” [camera ready artwork] (1978)
Box 1 Folder 8 Untitled (Concrete Poetry) [hand typeset] (1978)
Box 2 Folder 1 “Act This Out” [silkscreen copies, proofs and working prints; 32 items], (1978)
Box 2 Folder 2 “as: another seven” [print of visual poem]. (1979)
Box 1 Folder 9 For “Pattern Poetry” [camera ready artwork] (1987)
Box 2 Folder 4  “Graphis 202 for Feline Quartet” [silkscreen].
(1997)

Box 1 Folder 10  “Song” [Musical score]. (n.d.)

Box 1 Folder 11  Untitled [prints, 9 items] (n.d.)

Sub-series B - Exhibition Materials
Size: 3 folders, 18 items

Exhibition posters, catalogs, and other promotional material for Higgins’s exhibits are included in this series. Six separate exhibits are represented including Intermedia, an exhibit held in the Albin O. Kuhn Gallery in 2003.

Box 1 Folder 12  Exhibition materials (1987-1988)

Box 1 Folder 12  Exhibition materials (1996-1999, n.d.)

Box 1 Folder 13  Exhibition materials (n.d.)


Box 1 Folder 14  Intermedia: The Dick Higgins Collection at UMBC. [fliers and bookmarks, approximately 10 items] (2003)

Sub-series C - Publications
Date: 1979-1992
Size: 5 items

This series includes two biographical works about Higgins as well as three books of his writing that were not published by Something Else Press, Higgins’s first publishing company. The books by Higgins that were published by Something Else Press are located in Series II.


Series II - Something Else Press
Date: 1961-1992 inclusive; 1961-1974 bulk
Size: 1 folder, 54 items
Dick Higgins founded Something Else Press in 1964. Higgins ran the press over the next 10 years from New York City, California, and Vermont, specializing in Fluxus works and other out of print publications, including several by Gertrude Stein. Something Else Press supported many “intermedia” projects, a term Higgins coined in a 1965 issue of the Something Else Newsletter, also found in this series. The publications have been cataloged and are stored by call number; these are non-circulating items and can only be viewed in the Special Collections Reading Room. The listing below is organized alphabetically by author last name; please see the Publications section of this finding aid for a chronological listing. The series also contains proofs for two book jackets: Merce Cunningham: Changes: Notes on Choreography edited by Frances Starr, and Lucy Church, Amiably by Gertrude Stein.

**Please note that items with an “[On shelf]” designation are currently being cataloged and will eventually have a call number assigned. Please contact Special Collections if you would like to view these items.

Box 3 Folder 1  Book jackets (1968-1969)


Temporary Box 1  *The Something Else Newsletter* 1, no.1 (1966).

Temporary Box 1  *The Something Else Newsletter* 1, no. 8 (April 1968).

Temporary Box 1  *The Something Else Newsletter* 2, no. 5 (Sept 1972).
Finding Aid for the Dick Higgins Collection
Albin O. Kuhn Library & Gallery, University of Maryland, Baltimore County


Series III – Fluxus
Date: 1958-2002
Size: 76 items
The final series contains Fluxus items and artwork by artists other than Dick Higgins as well as collections or anthologies. As a founding member of the Fluxus movement, Higgins participated in many of the anthologies. All materials in this series that have a call number have been cataloged; those with box and folder numbers have not. Like all Special Collections materials, the cataloged items can be viewed in the Special Collections Reading Room only. The best effort has been made to house items in numerically sequential boxes but due to the irregularity of the item sizes this was not always possible; please note the box, folder, or call number listed when requesting an item.

Sub-series A – Individual Artists
Size: 16 folders, 33 items
Items are arranged alphabetically by the artist’s last name. See sub-series III.B for individual artwork contained in Fluxus collections and anthologies.

Box 7 Folder 2 Arain-Mission, Alain (1967)
Box 4 Folder 1 Barra, F. (1966)
Box 4 Folder 2. Brecht, George (1961, 1963)
Temporary Box 2 Cage, John. (9) Empty Words; Parte iii. Ediciones +/-491, 1992.
Box 4 Folder 3. Cage, John (1992)
Box 4 Folder 4. Danon, Betty (n.d.)
Box 4 Folder 5. Friedman, Ken (1971, n.d.)
Box 1 Folder 15. Johnson, Ronald (1996)
Box 5 Folder 1. Jones, Joe (1988)
Temporary Box 4 Knowles, Alison. Cena Per Otto. Pari and Dispari, ed. Cavriago, Reggio Emila, Italy: [1985].
Temporary Box 1 Mallarmé, Stéphane. Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard. Publication information unknown. (n.d.)
Box 7 Folder 3 Niikuni, Seiichi (1967)
Box 5 Folder 2 Niikuni, Seiichi (1976)
Box 5 Folder 3 Oliveros, Pauline (n.d.)
Finding Aid for the Dick Higgins Collection
Albin O. Kuhn Library & Gallery, University of Maryland, Baltimore County


Box 6 Folder 1  Sorin, Raphaël (1990)
Box 6 Folder 2  Valoch, Jiri (n.d)
Box 6 Folder 3  Williams, Emmett (1988)
Temporary Box 2  Williams, Jonathan. Aposiopeses. Edition 61/100. (n.d.)
Box 6 Folder 4  Unknown artist (n.d.)

Sub-series B – Collections
Date: 1960-2002 inclusive; 1980-2002 bulk
Size: 44 items
This sub-series contains collections that demonstrate the variety of thought and art forms that were included in the Fluxus movement. Typically only the editor is named in the citations below; please contact Special Collections to view the items in person or request information on a specific artist or item.
Box 8 contains items from the Flux Kit, a collection of Fluxus collectibles produced by ReFlux Editions and available through Printed Matter in 2002. This listing is chronological; the items in Box 8 have been listed alphabetically by artist last name.

Temporary Box 3  Notebook 1 (April 1970) [Mail art].

Temporary Box 3  *Le Point d'Ironie* no. 5 (April 1980)


Temporary Box 1  *Kaldron: a journal of visual poetry and language art*, autumnal equinox issue (1986)


Temporary Box 2  *Performing Arts Journal* Number 44, vol. 15, no. 2 (May 1993)


Box 8  *ReFlux Editions items:*


Finding Aid for the Dick Higgins Collection  
Albin O. Kuhn Library & Gallery, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Box 8  

Box 8  

Box 8  

Box 8  

Box 8  

Box 8  

Box 8  

Box 8  

Series IV – Franklin Furnace  
Date: 1979-2001  
Size: 4 folders, 22 items  
Founded in 1976, Franklin Furnace has provided a venue for otherwise unsupported artists to present avant-garde, performance, and time-based art. “Fluxus: A Conceptual Country” began an international tour at Franklin Furnace in October 1993. This series contains posters, promotional materials for upcoming events, and artist postcards.

Box 9 Folder 1  
1 patch, 1 Franklin Furnace “Risk” Poker Chip (n.d.)

Box 9 Folder 2  
11 “Great Performances at Franklin Furnace” Postcards

Box 9 Folder 3  
8 Promotional materials announcing upcoming events at Franklin Furnace and poster designed by Dick Higgins for Concrete Poetry exhibit at Metropolitan Museum of Art (1986)

Box 9 Folder 4  
Publications

Complete listing of publications in the Dick Higgins Collection, by author:


Cage, John. *(9) Empty Words; Parte iii.* Ediciones +/- 491, 1992.


*Joglars* 3 (1966)


Kaldron: *a journal of visual poetry and language art*, autumnal equinox issue (1986)


*The Kenyon Review* 27, no. 3 (Summer 1965).


*Le Point d'Ironie* no. 5 (April 80)


Mallarmé, Stéphane. *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*. Publication information unknown.


Performing Arts Journal Number 44, vol. 15, no. 2 (May 1993)


Shiomi, Mieko. *Events & Games*. Tokyo: Gallery 360, [2005]

*The Something Else Newsletter* 1, no.1 (1966); vol. 1, no. 8 (April 1968); vol. 2, no. 5 (Sept 1972).


**Something Else Press publications, by date (located in Series II):**
See listing in Series II container list for publications by author


Finding Aid for the Dick Higgins Collection
Albin O. Kuhn Library & Gallery, University of Maryland, Baltimore County


*The Something Else Newsletter* 1, no. 8 (April 1968).


*The Something Else Newsletter* 2, no. 5 (Sept 1972).


*Flux Kit* items by ReFlux Editions, by creator (located in Series III.B):


Bibliography

Publications used for this finding aid:


Other repositories containing information about Higgins:

University of Iowa
Dick Higgins Collection, MsC 790. 1968-1993, 7 linear feet. http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/spec-coll/MSC/ToMsC800/MsC790/MsC790.htm
Donated from several sources, “including Ken Friedman, Buster Cleveland, and Steve Durland,” this collection of Higgins material includes correspondence, writings, posters, and prints. A collection guide that contains an itemized inventory is available at the collection website (see above). The Higgins Collection is a part of the University of Iowa Libraries Alternative Traditions in Contemporary Art Collection.

Northwestern University
Dick Higgins Collection, Special Collections, Deering Art Library
This collection is currently being processed. Donated by Hannah Higgins and the Higgins family, materials from all aspects of Dick Higgins’s life are represented. Manuscripts, musical scores, artwork, correspondence, photographs, serials, and financial documents are included.

J. Paul Getty Art Center
Dick Higgins Papers, 1960-1994 http://archives.getty.edu:8082/cgi/f/findaid/findaid-idx?sid=cf15a6efdd84cabd961323befede5e8e;c=utf8a;idno=US::CMalG::870613
This expansive collection contains over 50 linear feet of correspondence in addition to other personal papers, business records, manuscripts, texts, and artwork, with a special focus on Higgins’s pattern poetry. Of note is their collection of business records from Something Else Press and original manuscripts from the publishing company’s texts.

Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Visual and Concrete Poetry http://www.rediscov.com/sacknerarchives/