

ALISON KNOWLES
A FEMINIST RECIPE FOR SUBJECTIVITY
OR HOW TO COOK YOUR LIFE

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Abstract: This study shows how the work of contemporary artist and founding member of Fluxus, Alison Knowles (b. 1933) performs choice, meaning, and subjectivity into being through holistic and temporally based corporeal experience—and how the reception and experience of the work creates the potential for transformation in the body of the receiver. I consider three of Knowles' works including #2, *Proposition, Make a Salad* (1962), *Potage Sec* (1989), and *Bread and Water* (1992-1995). I argue that each artwork is an ontological exercise, providing the viewer with a way to experience a new conception of being in the world. Through the use of the quotidian, the act of cooking, the ecological implications of sustenance, and their connection to our human becoming, Knowles' work connect the viewer to their life and place in the world. My methodology utilizes feminist-based phenomenology, pragmatism, hauntology, and folklore studies. I argue that it remains a critical enterprise to consider Knowles from a feminist perspective, more so from a Beauvoirian one, as the works are an expression and experience of temporality, calling attention to the process of being to becoming through time. There have been a handful of scholars who have discussed Knowles' proto-feminist stance. While these scholars have begun considering Knowles' work through a feminist lens, it is important to note that this has not been analyzed in detail—nor has there been a consideration of her work in concert with Beauvoir. While it is critical to understand and revisit Knowles' work from her early period, it is increasingly important to look to more recent periods of her career as well. The culture of reclamation threatens to eclipse the mid-career work of an artist who has continued her practice for over sixty years. It is with this understanding that this paper analyzes two of Knowles' later works, neither of which have received significant scholarship but deserve focused attention. Consideration of these three works points to the critical importance of cooking and temporally based mundane processes that have the power to transform one's perception of their own subjectivity and experience of lived time.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Cooking is not a mystery.
The more heart we put out
the more heart we put in.
To bring cooking alive
we give our life. Giving
our life willingly we don't
get put out. Washing cutting cooking cleaning,
exploring ways to give life to our life.
Not knowing already how and what to do,
practice feeling it
out of what is not known
through the warmth and anxiety,
not sticking to a particular way,
insisting it is the only way
even though it is quite good;
open to feeling the various possibilities,
the tentative ways of giving life to our life.

To feel out our left hand, our back, our toes,
to feel out our breathing, our movements, our stance,
this is our freedom, this is our wisdom.
The mystery is that it is possible to do
what we don't know how to do.
Edward Espe Brown, *Tassajara Cooking*¹

Alison Knowles (b. 1933), is an American intermedia artist and founding member of Fluxus. Her formal training occurred at the Pratt Institute in the mid-1950s where she studied to be a painter working under abstractionists, Adolph Gottlieb, Franz Klein, and Josef Albers. While

¹ Edward Espe Brown, *Tassajara Cooking*, 3rd Printing. edition (Boston: Shambhala, 1986).

Knowles destroyed all but two of her paintings from this period, her training in the performativity of abstract expressionism was foundational to her experiments in Fluxus.²

Fluxus was a loosely-organized avant-garde group of internationally and interdisciplinary based artists, composers, writers, and designers, primarily active from 1962-1978.³ Fluxus has also been defined as an attitude that directed and still informs the way in which one can make art and live one's life—Fluxus speaks to a collapse of a boundary between the two.⁴ Fluxus artworks produce experience rather than a traditional object, they invite participation and direct engagement to be felt by all the senses. Philosophically opposed to traditional notions of authorship and mastery, Fluxus was anti-commodity, non-programmatic, participatory, and an experience-based project that used common materials and quotidian inspiration, highlighting process over product.

It is my intent in this study to show how Knowles' work performs choice, meaning, and subjectivity into being through holistic and temporally based corporeal experience—and how the reception and experience of the work creates the potential for transformation in the body of the receiver. This paper will consider three of Knowles' works including one of her early event scores, #2, *Proposition, Make a Salad* (1962), a sculptural edition titled *Potage Sec* (1989), and a series of prints and subsequent book titled *Bread and Water* (1992-1995). I argue that each artwork is an ontological exercise, providing the viewer with a way to experience a new conception of being in the world, connecting both the artist and viewer to their own life and the whole of humanity through the transcendental banal.

² Alison Knowles, "The Mail-Interview with Alison Knowles by Ruud Janssen - 2007," 2007, 4.

³ Owen F. Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude*, 2nd Printing edition (San Diego, Calif.: San Diego State University, 1998), 3. As discussed by various Fluxus scholars and artists, to call Fluxus a movement has been met with some resistance. Those closest to Fluxus have described it, as Smith does in his book, as a shared attitude, or collective front, rather than a codified movement.

⁴ Smith, 1.

The roots of the term transcendental banal derive from Knowles' stated connection to nature and from the American Transcendentalist movement as articulated by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, as well as being informed by the Zen-based experimental practices of John Cage, so embraced by Knowles and her early fellow Fluxus associates.⁵ Articulated by Ralph Waldo Emerson in his 1836 essay, "Nature," transcendentalism understands the natural world as a symbolic expression of the divine, offering a physical experience of the ineffable. Thus, transcendentalism was both a radical expression of connection with the natural world and one's own experience, individual conviction, and consciousness. Transcendentalism was an effort toward and stated need for a personal and intuitive experience with the divine, available to every person. Immanence, a fundamental Transcendentalist principle, being the manifestation of the divine within each individual soul and the physical world which we experience and inhabit, guided both the movement and Thoreau's later text, "Civil Disobedience" (1849). The Transcendentalists reversed the privileging of spirit over matter by locating the presence of spirit within matter itself. While I am more interested in existentialist, specifically Beauvoirian, notions of transcendence and immanence, it is important to situate the term within the American Transcendentalist movement as Knowles uses text excerpts from *The Journals of Henry David Thoreau* in her *Bread and Water* series. Knowles' connection to nature and a prescient commitment to environmentalism, which underscore her connection to Transcendentalism, will be further explored in this paper.

Moreover, transcendence and immanence are critical concepts in existentialism and phenomenology as a way to describe the nature of experience. The existentialist belief refers to a secularized notion of how subjectivity involves the ability to transcend one's confinement to the present and actualize and experience a future or a project in living time. Simone de Beauvoir's

⁵ Judith Richards, "Oral History Interview with Alison Knowles, June 1-2, 2010," *Smithsonian Archives of American Art*, June 1, 2010, 2. In this interview Knowles stated that her first memories were of her maternal grandmother's garden in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

analysis of the situation men and women find themselves in complicates the relationship between immanence and transcendence, as she positions these states not in opposition to one another but to their dual innate presence within both sexes.⁶ For Beauvoir, a human's experience of temporality is structured around the notions of immanence and transcendence and the "classical phenomenological account of the triadic temporal structure of experience" meaning past, present, future.⁷ Men and women have the ability to experience both transcendence and immanence, an experience of the present and the past/future, however, this experience is complicated by sexual difference which structures how they live in time. Because a woman lives in relation to men, she is limited to the present, broken from her past and unable to look to the future, she is therefore relegated to a life of immanence whereas men experience all levels of temporality.⁸ Though this experience may have been more profound in the mid-century when Beauvoir wrote *The Second Sex*, there is no doubt that women still carry the burden of invisible labor within family structures.⁹ Woman's routinized everyday life keeps her confined to a dull present that Knowles reactivates by making strange the quotidian processes of the everyday.

Knowles' practice falls somewhere in-between Transcendentalist understandings of transcendence and immanence. While her work is not based in a connection to the divine as defined in Christianity, deific qualities can be seen in her emphasis and focus on the natural world, whereas her use of everyday materials, banal tasks, and common procedures rely more on

⁶ Megan M. Burke, "Gender as Lived Time: Reading *The Second Sex* for a Feminist Phenomenology of Temporality," *Hypatia* 33, no. 1 (February 1, 2018): 117, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12386>.

⁷ Burke, 117.

⁸ Burke, 119.

⁹ Lucia Ciciolla and Suniya S. Luthar, "Invisible Household Labor and Ramifications for Adjustment: Mothers as Captains of Households," *Sex Roles*, January 22, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-018-1001-x>. This labor which includes managing children's routines and household supplies, organizing schedules for each member of the family unit and the family as a whole, and maintaining order and general maintenance of the home takes an emotional and mental toll on women. Though there have been strides made since 1949 in the structure of family dynamics, with more women working outside the home and sharing with their husbands in the responsibilities of finances and instilling their children with values, there is still much more work to be done to achieve full equity for women within domestic settings.

the theories of immanence. If analyzed in the language of Beauvoir, Knowles' practice is a transcendent gestalt, as it changes from a state of immanence into the transcendent: its simple means transform into something greater than its parts. Knowles' work straddles the line between both impulses: she looks to the banal, to everyday objects and actions but uses them towards a transformational end. She activates past and present experience in living time and extends the resultant knowledge into one's future. This is what I describe as the transcendental banal.

The experience one has as a viewer and participant of Knowles' work generates the potential to transform one's conception and experience of their position through the quotidian; in particular, this paper explores Knowles' use of food, the act of daily cooking, the ecological implications of sustenance, and its connection to our human becoming. I will explore the way Knowles challenges codified systems which include archival practices, the industrial agriculture complex, and woman's subjugated position through her artworks by activating the body through lived experience, but too, how the work allows for greater engagement in one's life regardless of gender. Through the use of indeterminacy, de-authoring of the work, and the medium of everyday experience, Knowles provides a situation for freedom in the body of the viewer. In existentialist terms, situated freedom, or our ability to have agency and make-meaning in our lives, whether or not we identify as an agent, is inhibited, though never determined by our situation. To experience and engage with Knowles' work is to engage in a process of unlearning these constraints, not to recover some essence of femininity but to open up the experience of humanity as an open-ended process enacted between the individual and the social formation.

Only at the age of 40, while writing *The Second Sex* (1949), did Beauvoir realize the female condition as truly oppressed. She attributed this late realization to the fact that she was always treated as an intellectual equal by her peers at the Sorbonne and was never interested in the traditional path of a woman: to be married and have children. Because of this, she never experienced the servitude of the housewife, isolated within her home and chained to the

responsibilities of wife and mother. This may explain Beauvoir's late identification as a feminist in the 1970s, twenty years after the publishing of *The Second Sex*. Knowles similarly never described herself as a feminist but has described herself as not being "enough of a feminist."¹⁰ Knowles partly attributed her stance, or lack thereof, to her acceptance in the field. She was the first female involved with Fluxus, which was all male although international, and says to have never experienced oppression from male artists like some of her other female peers.¹¹ Like Beauvoir, she would see and empathize with women who had experienced abuse within the art world, but never experienced or allowed this to occur to her.

Ironically, the most blatant exclusion Knowles ever experienced was from feminists while she was teaching at CalArts. The militancy of some women involved with the second-wave feminist movement and women's groups like the Feminist Art Program (FAP) provided little flexibility to women who were allied with men. Developed in 1970 by artist Judy Chicago at Fresno State College and continued by Miriam Shapiro and Chicago at CalArts in 1971, FAP was a woman centered art group that excluded the participation of men, and in Knowles' case, women who worked with men and saw them as allies. While at CalArts, Knowles' request to participate in *Womanhouse* was denied by the FAP due to her openness to work with members of the male sex.¹² It is, perhaps only now, nearly fifty years after the rise of second-wave feminism that Knowles' work and contributions to the struggle for true intersectional equality and female transcendence can be realized.

There have been a handful of scholars including Julia Robinson, Kristine Stiles, Hannah Higgins, and Nicole Woods, who have discussed Knowles' proto-feminist stance; aspects of each

¹⁰ Richards, "Oral History Interview with Alison Knowles, June 1-2, 2010," 27.

¹¹ Richards, 27.

¹² Nicole L. Woods, "Object/Poems: Alison Knowles's Feminist Archite(x)Ture," X-TRA, accessed May 3, 2018, <http://x-traonline.org/article/objectpoems-alison-knowless-feminist-architexure/>.

of their texts will serve as a support and point of expansion for this study.¹³ While these scholars have begun considering the nuance and potential in Knowles' work through a feminist lens, it is important to note that this has not been analyzed in detail—nor has there been a consideration of her work in concert with Simone de Beauvoir. Aside from Knowles' professed familiarity with *The Second Sex*, my link between Knowles and Beauvoir stems from their commitment to purposeful and productive engagement with the world through positive projects that extend one's life toward transcendence.¹⁴

While it is critical to understand and revisit Knowles' work from her early period, like *Make a Salad*, as the work sets a clear trajectory for her later works and maintains relevance in our contemporary moment, it is increasingly important to look to more recent periods of her career as well. The culture of reclamation, which can be seen as a strategy for the market, in which an artist and their early controversial work is rediscovered for a new unknowing group of collectors eager to gobble up the next best thing, can be damaging (or at the very least irresponsible) to an artist's process and development. The work that was made when an artist was young and shiny will always be attractive, but to look at their later work when their practice has matured over time and their ideas have been given the chance to progress can tell us something different. It is with this understanding that this paper will look to two of Knowles' later works *Potage Sec* (1989) and *Bread and Water* (1992-1995), neither of which have received significant scholarship.

My study, in focusing first on one of Knowles' now famous event scores, *Make a Salad* (1962), but promptly moving forward to her two later works *Potage Sec* (1989) and *Bread and Water* (1992-1995), presents a greater focus on a period of Knowles' work that has yet to be discussed. Consideration of these three works clearly points to the critical importance of cooking

¹³ I use the term proto-feminist as Knowles' work, like Beauvoir, preceded but anticipated the concerns of the second-wave feminism of the 1970s.

¹⁴ Cassidy Petrazzi, Interview with Alison Knowles, June 20, 2018.

and temporally based mundane processes that have the power to transform one's perception of their own subjectivity and experience of lived time. There is an obvious link between domestic cooking practices and feminine subjugation. Beauvoir speaks about a woman's relationship to food in *The Second Sex*, however, I felt from the start that Knowles' work moves beyond this association. Her home life, work, and the way she describes her connection to food, has no connection to being enslaved in the kitchen. Instead, her work speaks to the critical need for nourishment and the way in which cultivation of culinary practice made us human—at its core, our connection to nature and food is about our human becoming.

My methodology utilizes feminist-based phenomenology, pragmatism, hauntology, and folklore studies, specifically looking to the work of Simone de Beauvoir, Megan Burke, John Dewey and Tom Gunning. I argue that it remains a critical enterprise to consider Knowles from a feminist perspective, more so from a Beauvoirian one, as the works are an expression and experience of temporality, calling attention to the process of being to becoming through time. Drawing on Beauvoir's discussion of the Other in *The Second Sex* I maintain that a lack of subjectivity must be replaced through freedom in the form of positive creative projects that engender new perceptions of being. I consider a woman's relationship to her situation in the world and how subjugation is physically taken up and ultimately exorcised by the body through the experience of Knowles' work.

I consider the work of John Dewey, whose formulations of aesthetic experience, which prioritize primary sensory experience in tandem with the individual's participation in the perception of art, aid in understanding the strategy of indeterminacy, a method foundational to Knowles's practice. I look to Jacques Derrida and Tom Gunning's use of hauntology to explore the ecological implications of Knowles' work and how this impacts our experience of her performative event scores and temporally based print work. Lastly, I employ folkloric studies to

discuss belief (which is akin to becoming) as a justifiable and tangible expression of knowledge through ritual and experience.

The second chapter, “Simone de Beauvoir and Alison Knowles Make a Salad” which analyzes *Make a Salad*, will look to Beauvoir’s account of becoming a woman written in *The Second Sex*, and her central assertion, that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”¹⁵

With this still radical statement in mind, I show how Knowles unlearns the embodied operation of patriarchy. In particular, I argue that through the performance and bodily enactment of everyday rituals typically done privately in the home, Knowles publicly unlearned and continues to defy the way that power and oppression are absorbed and expressed by the body and reconceives what it means to be human. Beauvoir’s statement naturally begs two opposing questions: How does a “becoming” occur and how can one un-become or resist a becoming?¹⁶ For if one can become a woman than one can also become something else. Moreover, as discussed by Burke, becoming a woman is not just a collection of acts but a *way of acting through lived experience*—it is a mode of being, belief, and knowledge, that happens in and through time by lived experience.

One of the most difficult challenges that Beauvoir spoke of is how to get women to see themselves with new eyes. It is this processes that Knowles’ work directly addresses—how to see both oneself and the world with a fresh perspective. Knowles’ brand of feminism is quiet and open, based in the idea that there are other ways of thinking, behaving, and being. Knowles’ work will never tell you who you should associate with, how to act, or what to think, but it will draw your whole body in for personal and collective experiences that help to change engraved patterns of thinking. Her feminism is an experience that pushes one forward into the future and offers a new way of conceiving ourselves and our place in the world.

¹⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, “Childhood,” in *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, 1 edition (New York: Vintage, 2011), 330.

¹⁶ Beauvoir, 330.

Chapter three, “Please Touch the Artwork: Potage Sec, Fluxus, and the Archive” centers on Knowles’ 1989 work, *Potage Sec*, commissioned by the Emily Harvey Foundation. The work is multidimensional: it is at once a poem, a sculpture, a time piece, and a performance encased in a small glass Pyrex, perfect for making soup—a reference to the title, “Potage Sec” translated from French meaning “dry soup.” The work contains a collection of 23 items which include “three seconds of time (hourglass),” a “red button,” a “500 lira coin with braille,” a “stone in the shape of a javelin from the Hudson River,” and various types of beans, amongst other magnificently ordinary items.

In this chapter I will consider how the work problematizes the traditional object-oriented relationship of artworks and how this serves as a means for unmanning the medium and archival systems.¹⁷ I use the concept of unmanning as a way to describe the complications that Fluxus work and specifically this sculpture poses for archival systems and exhibition practices. Knowles’ pieces rely on the viewer to directly and physically engage with the work through touch, smell, and sight. The experience of touching artwork has long been discouraged, the oils of our fingers could ruin a paintings surface, even light must be avoided, however, Fluxus and Knowles’ work was always intended for sensorial corporeal experience.

Chapter four, “Spectral Earth in Bread and Water” analyzes Knowles’ print series and book, *Bread and Water* (1992-1995), another work that looks to the everyday procedures of our daily lives that sustain us. Upon making loaves of bread, Knowles began to notice the resemblance of the cracks in the bread to rivers. She charted an atlas and created a topographical piece of sorts that matches loaves of bread to actual rivers around the world. The initial

¹⁷ Julia Robinson, “The Sculpture of Indeterminacy: Alison Knowles’s Beans and Variations,” *Art Journal* 63, no. 4 (2004): 15, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4134508>. Robinson takes the term unmanning from *Entmannung* as Eric Santner uses it in his book *My Own Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber’s Secret History of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) to describe artist, John Cage’s, project as a method of breaking down codified systems. She extends this term to Knowles’ work to describe her commitment to a sense of openness, rather than the desire or attempt to replace a male centered model with a female one. I will use this term to expand on Robinson’s assertions and use it toward an understanding of the way in which Knowles complicates traditional relations with both experiencing and collecting art.

performance of making the bread developed into a series of Xeroxes once she noticed the correlation of the cracks to rivers. The Xeroxes of the river cracks running through the bottom of the loaves were then made into a series of palladium and cyanotype prints. The work's final development to book form, published in 1995 by Left Hand Books, occurred with the matching of various excerpts of text and literary passages that contained geographical and ecological information to each individual loaf. The introduction, written by Henry Martin, gets right to the point with the first sentence, stating: "This book is an experience."¹⁸

This chapter will use the Derridean-based concept of hauntology to investigate the environmental implications present in this work, its relationship to *Make a Salad*, and how the work generates a new epistemology. Hauntology is of particular use as it implies both ambiguity and possibility which resides in the works performative elements of breadmaking and printmaking. Spectrality is used to discuss the process of printmaking and the historical connection between using light as a recording device and a method for contact with one's imagination and the spirit world. This relationship resonates directly with Knowles' prints of bread which are ambiguous and other worldly images that recall the earth or extraterrestrial structures. The environmental concerns in *Bread and Water* are both explicit and indefinite, as the work recalls the preciousness of the earth and its resources but requires one's imagination and participation. The works commitment to nature and the earth's preciousness is linked to Knowles wider practice and in particular *Make a Salad* which had prescient connections to environmentalism in 1962 and overt references to ecological activism in its contemporary renditions.

So why does Alison Knowles matter? An event score, which is the form by which Knowles defines her work, produces "ontological thinking [...]: it engages us in the opening wholeness of our being, and "takes place" as much in the life of our feet and hands and eyes as it

¹⁸ Alison Knowles, *Bread and Water* (Left Hand Books, 1995), x.

does in our head, our brains, or our mind.”¹⁹ Furthermore the work provides access to new meanings, sensations, and modes of perception engaging the viewer/performer directly in their own experience—a diverse route towards ontological knowledge and access to primary experience.

Knowles has said that her “Fluxus involves performance as its major ingredient.”²⁰ In discussing the spirit of art and of Fluxus, Knowles has compared her activities to that of cooking, one “tries to interrupt and disrupt the boundary between inside and outside [...]. It’s not unlike a soup, adjusting the spices and then knowledgably, we are in charge, before opening the cage door, releasing the bird or bowl, so to speak. We have done our best from our own seat.”²¹ By using the objects of her daily life in tandem with patterns of ritual as fodder for artistic expression, Knowles provides an experience of possibility, intimacy with the self, and new access to freedom. Collapsing the boundary between high and low art, between art and life, between One and the Other, and artist and participant—her work is a radical gesture of renewed subjectivity.

¹⁹ Hannah Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, First edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 37.

²⁰ Janet A. Kaplan et al., “Flux Generations,” *Art Journal* 59, no. 2 (2000): 9, <https://doi.org/10.2307/778097>.

²¹ Alison Knowles et al., “Art as Spiritual Practice,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 24, no. 3 (2002): 20.

CHAPTER II

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR AND ALISON KNOWLES *MAKE A SALAD*

In late May of 2008, The Tate Modern in London held a three-day event which they called the *Fluxus Long Weekend*, a part of their annual series, *UBS Openings: The Long Weekend*. The *UBS Openings* celebrates intermedia, or, as the Tate puts, “the extraordinary moments of fusion between different art forms, such as dance, performance, installation and music.”²² That year’s Fluxus dedicated event invited several Fluxus artists to perform key Fluxus scores, one of which was Alison Knowles’ 1962 score, *Proposition #2, Make a Salad* (figure 1, 2).

Make a Salad, which first premiered at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1962, was performed by Knowles in The Tate’s grand Turbine Hall, with the artist positioned on the bridge overlooking the space below. The score itself describes a simple action to be executed: make a salad. In preparation for the performance, Knowles spent the day before the performance at Borough Market, the renowned 1,000-year-old food market at the foot of the London Bridge, purchasing organic produce for her event. With her at the Tate on the day of the performance, Knowles decided to have the museum’s professional chefs assist her with the cutting, chopping, and preparing of over 200 pounds of lettuce, carrots, radishes, tomatoes, spring onions, and chives. In addition to the musical accompaniment provided by cellist, Lucy Railton, each cutting

²² Tate, “Tate Modern to Host the First Ever Flux-Olympiad and Other Unique Events as Part of UBS Openings: The Long Weekend – Press Release,” Tate, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://www.tate.org.uk/press/press-releases/tate-modern-host-first-ever-flux-olympiad-and-other-unique-events-part-ubs>.

board and preparation table was miked, carrying the sounds of chopped vegetables through the space. Once the vegetables were ready, they were tossed over the ledge of the bridge, twenty-five feet down, to a blue tarp where students from Goldsmiths College caught the salad. Salad dressing soon met the salad on the tarp and was tossed using a sterile metal garden rake, mixed together for 2,500 people.

The performance at the Tate was certainly the largest but not the last performance of the score. The piece has been performed in celebration of Earth Day, April 22, 2012, at New York City's High Line Park, recently in July of 2018 at the Aspen Art Museum, and at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles as part of a Fluxus Festival organized by the LA Philharmonic and the Getty Research Institute in February of 2019. *Make a Salad* may be Knowles' most recognized score, and for good reason, as it presents the audience with a simple, familiar, and nourishing every day action that becomes a participatory, transformative, and transcendent event.

Drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's account of becoming a woman, I show how Knowles unlearns the embodied operation of patriarchy and generates the potential for de-conditioning in her performance of *Make a Salad*. In particular, I argue that through the performance and bodily enactment of an everyday ritual typically done privately in the home—making a salad, Knowles publicly unlearns the way that power and oppression are absorbed and expressed by the body and reconceives what it means to be a human being. The primary experience that is generated in Knowles' work, done in lived time, creates a potential for transformation, renewed meaning, and subjectivity. The recovery of subjectivity is achieved through the event score which Knowles uses to illustrate what humanity feels like, sounds like, tastes like, and acts like. In this chapter, I will look to Knowles' event score, #2, *Proposition, Make a Salad*, 1962 as a way to imagine, perform, and experience, a different kind of becoming than that of the Other.

The account I develop here is an attempt to explore several interconnecting inquiries, the first of which surrounds the embodied operation of patriarchy. If we are attempting to reveal how Knowles unlearns patriarchy, then we must ask how one learns to embody this situation of womanhood. This central question, of which Beauvoir provides both a historical and experiential account, leads us to a string of relating queries: how is patriarchy absorbed and inscribed in women? How is patriarchy repeated and reinforced in women? How does patriarchy structure a woman's experience? And finally, how does a woman recover her subjectivity, her humanity? Towards this end, I take a closer look at the primary experience that is generated in Knowles' work, and how this creates a potential for transformation, renewed meaning, and subjectivity, specifically through the lens of temporality. Within the form that her work takes, the event score, I analyze three elements that provide a situation for freedom in the body of the viewer/performer: indeterminacy, the de-authoring of the work, and the performance of everyday ritual. It is the fusion of these elements that aids in the recovery of humanity, as Knowles creates a situation for the viewer to experience a daily action expressed through the body anew. The open approach Knowles uses in her work provides an opportunity for the viewer to have a tactile engagement and experience with the work—without whom, the piece remains incomplete.

A main consideration throughout the chapter will be Beauvoir's discussion of the situation of women as the Other in "Volume II: Lived Experience" of *The Second Sex*. It is here that Beauvoir provides an account of what a woman is, how women become the Other, and how and why women reinforce their subjugated position. I will draw on Iris Marion Young's critical reading of female bodily comportment to underscore the physiology of womanhood and how subjugation is physically taken up by the body. I will also underscore the Beauvoirian process of becoming with Megan Burke's analysis of the feminist phenomenology of temporality, which is a foundational element in gendered difference and woman's subjugation. Finally, I will rely on Lori Jo Marso's recent contributions on Beauvoir in her book, *Politics with Beauvoir: Freedom in the*

Encounter (2017), as a way to further analyze how the event score, or site of the encounter, is the primary way to experience and generate freedom.

Sitting with her husband, Dick Higgins in a cab in London in 1962, the day before a Fluxus Festival, titled *The Festival of Misfits*, which was scheduled at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, Knowles decided to make a salad for her performance the following day.²³ Like many Fluxus performances, *Make a Salad* was directed by an instructional text known by those in Fluxus as an “event score.” In this instance, the score itself reads simply, “make a salad.” An event score requires completion, and in its need for participation, it instigates primary experience. An event score “aspire(s) to originate acts of our own (or of others) that finally belong to a different order of reality, since a score is a text that’s couched in a language the very purpose of which is to see itself transformed into another and more ample language.”²⁴ In *Make a Salad*, the score invited participants to consider the aesthetics of the time and actions of making a salad.

The morning of the original historic event, Knowles went to the market to buy all the materials for her salad. That night, in a modestly-sized room within the ICA, she performed the score, with help from the audience, in front a group of people. The performance included washing and chopping the lettuce, carrots, and other vegetables, making a vinaigrette, mixing it all up in a large wooden bowl, and finally serving it to the audience. Making a salad is an action most of us perform several times a week, if not every day, so how might such a simple action invoke such transformative results? Knowles’ score pointedly attends to the body experiencing an everyday action in present time with others, and, through its indeterminate structure, calls one’s attention to the process of doing and becoming—rather than to the performance’s mundane end product.

²³ Judith Richards, “Oral History Interview with Alison Knowles, June 1-2, 2010,” *Smithsonian Archives of American Art*, June 1, 2010, 37.

²⁴ Henry Martin, *Alison Knowles Um-Laut*, First Edition (Köln, Germany: Galerie Schuppenhauer; Derringer Books, 1992), 10, <https://www.abebooks.com/signed-first-edition/Alison-Knowles-Um-laut-Art-Galerie-Schuppenhauer/1293299913/bd>.

The first iteration of the score (figure 3, 4), by what we can tell from the early documentation, was a joyous, haphazard experience of cooking with others. The images taken at the ICA from that evening show many people standing over a low table, with hands and faces intently involved in the action of preparing the raw materials. The aftereffects of the score recall a Dionysian dinner party, abounding with the detritus of preparation and consumption, plates, carrot tops, lettuce leaves, and brown paper abound, the effects illustrate a joyous event of communal nourishment.

More recent performances have transformed the score into a slightly more formal affair, with a formula Knowles now likes to use at most of her contemporary renditions, with the prep tables up high to allow the salad stuff to fall below to a tarp that patiently awaits the raw materials. It is a gestural reference to her early days at Pratt, when she was studying abstract expressionism. Too, the dressing of the salad, which takes place once the vegetables have met the tarp, recalls the iconic photograph that Hans Namuth took of Jackson Pollock at work in 1950. Gripping a plastic quart container filled with pepper in one hand, Knowles shuffles around the tarp, wearing special cloth booties to preserve the cleanliness of the food, and seasons the salad much like Pollock tossing his paint-laden brush around the canvas laid out on the floor (figure 5). Similar to Pollock's monumental paintings, the scale of the work pushes the score into the space of spectacle: feeding hundreds of people, Knowles depends on a large tarp as salad bowl, gallon containers to hold the vinaigrette, and garden rakes to mix and dress the salad. What was once a more intimate gathering is now pushed into the space of a block party or food bazaar, with music, hordes of people, and salad for all.

What is it about this score that has cultivated such interest? After all, it is a simple action we all (or most) perform at home on a regular basis. I argue that the answer, the interest in the score, and its lasting impact, resides in its ability to illustrate the process of becoming through lived experience. It is this element of action that is integral to the impact of the score, as "...doing

emphasizes the concrete condition of being. This doing, because it has a temporal dimension, equally calls into questions the relationship of being to becoming, in and through time...²⁵ Furthermore, in the language of Beauvoir, the act of performing, doing and making a salad in public with other produces both a positive project of creation enabling the transformation of the female subject, but too, generates freedom by interacting with others.²⁶ “For Beauvoir, to encounter others is not only a fact of existence; it is also the *only* way to produce and experience freedom. Being with others is a foundational quality of freedom.”²⁷ Indeed, not only is *Make a Salad* an encounter between the artist and the audience, who are a necessary component to complete the piece, it is also a physical experience and expression of doing, making, and producing, the score actualizes the process of becoming.

But what exactly is Knowles becoming as she makes her salad? Beauvoir’s transformative assertion, written in her 1949 opus, *The Second Sex*, that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” naturally raises two opposing questions: first, how does becoming occur? And second, how can one un-become or resist a becoming?²⁸ For if one can become a woman then one can also become something else. From the outset, Beauvoir presents the position of woman as a condition and result, as she states, “So not every female human being is necessarily a woman; she must take part in this mysterious and endangered reality known as femininity.”²⁹ Resisting the contemporaneous understanding of woman as fixed to her biology, Beauvoir moves beyond biological essentialism to argue, rather, that being a woman is a condition, it is something that she must take part of, participate in, and assume. In other words, it is not built into her biology, nor is it a natural expression of self. Furthermore, it is a performance

²⁵ Kristine Stiles, “Between Water and Stone; Fluxus Performance, A Metaphysics of Acts,” in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Janet Jenkins, Joan Rothfuss, and Elizabeth Armstrong, First edition (Minneapolis: Distributed Art Pub Inc, 1993), 64.

²⁶ Lori Jo Marso, *Politics with Beauvoir: Freedom in the Encounter* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2017), 2.

²⁷ Marso, 2.

²⁸ Beauvoir, “Childhood,” 330.

²⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, “Introduction,” in *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, 1 edition (New York: Vintage, 2011), 23.

for which she is rewarded, encouraging her continued participation; in this way, women are made and make themselves the Other. Indeed, if women have the power to be complicit and internalize their own oppression it means they also have the power to undo it as well. It is, therefore, necessary that the emancipation from a life as the Other, must be achieved through positive projects of creation that engender new perceptions of self and being. This is the only way for freedom to be attained.

Furthermore, becoming a woman is not just a collection of acts but a *way of acting through lived experience*—it is a mode of being, belief, and knowledge, that happens in and through time by lived experience.³⁰ Burke expands on Beauvoir’s notion of becoming by suggesting that equally as important, is an understanding of a feminist phenomenology of temporality. Burke argues that Beauvoir “does not see ‘woman’ as a mere becoming, as that which unfolds in time, but instead understands becoming a woman to be realized as *lived time*.”³¹ For Beauvoir, woman’s experience of temporality is that of waiting, or as Burke refers to it, a passive present, relegated to a life of waiting she is limited to immanence, a life without a past or a future. This has obvious implications for Knowles’ *Make a Salad* as the event score is an experience of lived time in which one has the potential to experience open and unfixed indeterminate temporality, changing the way time is lived as a woman. Stripped of the trappings of theater, *Make a Salad* becomes an experience that can have a direct impact on a person’s life each time they decide to make a salad or anything else for themselves or others. Instead of the act of cooking participating in a persistent present that Beauvoir speaks of, Knowles’ score supports this daily ritual as a relevant and transformative act in the present that propels one’s life into the future by being a score that one can remember, recreate, and reperform.

³⁰ Burke, “Gender as Lived Time,” 112.

³¹ Burke, 111.

The event score, first developed by Fluxus associate George Brecht in 1958, was initiated through exposure to ideas of New Music in John Cage's Experimental Composition class at the New School for Social Research in New York.³² While Knowles herself was not in the class, her husband, artist Dick Higgins, was, and she and their circle of friends were highly influenced by the ideas generated in the program.³³ An event score is a simple instruction written on a white card, usually only a few lines long, that is a performative script describing an action to be executed. The work cannot exist or be completed without the viewer. Like a musical score, an event score can be realized by people other than the artist/creator and is open to variation and interpretation. In a conceptual link to Cage, the event score was centered on the performance of everyday rituals or actions, such as making a salad, turning on a lamp, or exiting a space. As Knowles recalled, the significance of Cage to both Fluxus but more importantly to her foundation as an artist is critical to understand.

There's no way to exaggerate the importance of John Cage, because he stepped out of music and began to feel that the energy of new music could apply to activities. Not only did he believe that, but he allowed us on to be on musical programs with events like showing and telling about your shoes or making a salad, and he just opened the doors between music and performance art.³⁴

By the time Cage led this class, he had spent nearly three decades developing his ideas on music which included the use of noise, chance, and silence, in tandem with a changed role of the author/composer.³⁵ In a now famous lecture, titled "Indeterminacy" which Cage delivered in Darmstadt, Germany in September of 1958, Cage laid bare the process of an unfixed, open, or indeterminate composition, a structure that would be foundational for Knowles. In the lecture,

³² Julia E. Robsinson, "The Brechtian Event Score: A Structure in Fluxus," *Performance Research* 7, no. 3 (2002): 117.

³³ Tyler Friedman, "Interview with Alison Knowles and Hannah Higgins," *Shepherd Express*, November 15, 2013, <https://shepherdexpress.com/api/content/5b978258-a5b1-5ea9-9a11-e3337840342d/>.

³⁴ Friedman.

³⁵ Julia Robinsion, "John Cage and Investiture: Unmanning the System," in *John Cage*, ed. Julia Robinsion (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2011), 176.

Cage described that an experimental action is one in which the “outcome is not foreseen [...] It cannot be repeated. When it is performed for a second time, the outcome is other than it was.”³⁶ The codification of the artist as ultimate producer was fully dismantled, and Cage’s ideas were now to be received by a new batch of young artists in his New School classes.

Knowles’ score, *Make a Salad*, is an indeterminate expression of the transcendental banal, relying on the audience to complete a fixed score or proposition that contains the possibility for transformation. The score itself presents a near limitless field of choice or opportunity for the performer, bringing new meaning back to a moment in daily life in one’s body. In other words, it is an indeterminate expression of the transcendental banal, relying on the audience to complete a proposition that contains the possibility for transformation. By placing value on the body, and its ability to register multisensory experiences, *Make a Salad* reinforces our connection to each other and to the world. At the same time, it calls our attention to the banal structures that regulate our experience in the world.

Those banal structures are a critical component to a woman’s becoming. As a woman’s temporal experience is organized by the passive present, a woman’s becoming is therefore organized through an altered experience of time which becomes an underlying configuration of her oppression and domination, relegating her to a life of immanence.³⁷ Gender is not a “process of acquisition” or a collection of acts, but is instead a way of acting through lived experience, it’s a “particular mode of assuming a world.”³⁸ Knowles presents us with a way out of immanence by creating an opportunity of revised temporality: the lived experience of a simultaneously communal and personal productive act that propels one into a future, allowing for a transcendent experience.

³⁶ John Cage and Kyle Gann, *Silence: Lectures and Writings, 50th Anniversary Edition*, 2 edition (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan, 2011), 35.

³⁷ Burke, “Gender as Lived Time,” 111.

³⁸ Burke, 111.

Gender is a key structure of political and social life, governing our experience of the world as well as how we perceive ourselves and others. Throughout Knowles' work, starting with *Make a Salad*, we see a deep connection to the process of dismantling institutional conditions—or as scholar Julia Robinson puts it, “not to replace one structure or institution with another but to dissolve the existing one in favor of precarious openness.”³⁹ While it is an ethical imperative to recognize what gender does to us and how it conditions our experience, feminist—and particularly queer—theorists have long argued that we must see beyond specific gender categories to interrogate the structure itself. The emergence of gender neutral or gender non-confirming language in the trans community is a critical contemporary example of the kind of opening or breaking down of systemic patriarchy that is implicit in Knowles' event score, *Make a Salad*.

Contrary to her other female Fluxus peers who were also producing work at the time that can be analyzed from a feminist perspective, the majority of Knowles' work resisted feminine essentialism. In most discussions of the work of female Fluxus artists, the focus rests on particular pieces such as Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964), in which the artist sat on a stage with a pair of scissors in front of her, allowing the audience to take turns cutting her clothing and keep a swatch, or Shigeko Kubota's *Vagina Painting* (1965). Preceding Carolee Schneeman's piece *Interior Scroll* (1975) by ten years, Kubota attached a paint brush to her vagina and used the brush to paint an expressionist painting. Art historian Kristine Stiles contends that these works “[usher] viewer-participants into the personal territories of their own anatomy and [focus] on the intimate senses of touch and smell.” *Make a Salad*, though it too involves the senses of touch and smell, equally calls attention to the temporal act of making, and doing. It opens up the time-based experience of being a human to engage the whole body in experience that propels itself forward into one's daily life.

³⁹ Robinson, “The Sculpture of Indeterminacy,” 109.

We show up in this world without prescribed intention—there is nothing essential about our being, we realize our potential, create the purpose in our lives, and make meaning. All of the value in our life is value we put there. As existence precedes essence, we can change what it means to be a woman. We find ourselves born to a situation that we did not choose, by parents we did not select, in a specific time and place, with certain abilities or disabilities, but within this situation we still have choice, things we can do. It is a life with limits but a life undetermined. Akin to situated freedom, it is a life of indeterminacy, chance, possibility, potential. The very structure of the indeterminate event score mimics this freedom by presenting a fixed situation with infinite results. One is given a structure but what one does with it is indeterminate – it can be performed by anybody, at any time, in anyplace and the results depend on the subject. Through the performance of the score, primary experience is generated and one’s potential is realized.

Make a Salad is an action derived from daily life, the material elements are not precious and can be bought at the market, the action can be performed in your home, in public, by yourself or preferably with others, the focused engagement in one task open the experience up to transformation. The phenomenology of experience, of action, of the body doing, making or eating, enables potential. Knowles’ score “situates the body in the center of knowledge as the principal means by which to interrogate the very conditions in which individuals interact with things and thereby produce social meanings”⁴⁰

The productive aspect of becoming un-Othered, or unoppressed, is a positive project of recovering and rediscovering the body in the world, unencumbered by unnatural prescriptions. The body lives in the world where we learn, repeat, and perform actions that can either expand or inhibit one’s subjectivity. The essential task for Beauvoir is for women to become free. The strive for freedom does not just include the practical assumption of economic autonomy, one must also be a creator in the world producing positive work that transforms her from a subjugated

⁴⁰ Stiles, “Between Water and Stone; Fluxus Performance, A Metaphysics of Acts,” 66.

position.⁴¹ The way forward is to restructure woman's loyalty and solidarity with women rather than the men they live with, are married to, or have children with. The way towards freedom, is centered within the social situation -- in order for a woman to regain and assert her human and equal status the system must change, and it must be changed by women. The first step in this change is for women to recover their value, their reason, and their humanity; one way to achieve this recovery is through lived experience.

The only instruction in Knowles's score: to make a salad, involves a mundane action many of us perform in our everyday lives and re-contextualizes it into performance. The ingredients are indeterminate but must be edible; one can include anything they desire in a salad. The score is performed by preparing and chopping the ingredients, tossing with dressing, and serving to the audience. It is an exploration into daily rituals that govern our lives and encourages a closer look at the habitual activities that we engage in. The purpose of completing a task recalls Iris Marion Young's assertions of the double-hesitation women experience towards their actions. By concentrating on one task, Knowles provides a moment to disregard the body's hesitation by focusing all attention to the physical task at hand. Through the focus of the work one realizes the details of their physical comportment and sensations, know the hand moves under the weight of a knife, how many cherry tomatoes you can hold and wash in one hand, how the salad sounds beneath the blade, how sour the vinegar tastes. It is a moment of recovery in the experience of nourishment and an intimate connection to the body.

One experience Beauvoir describes in her chapter, "The Married Woman" centers our attention on the experience of cooking as felt by a woman in 1949. Relegated to the home in relative isolation, each day a woman prepares food for her husband and children, the one alchemical and potentially creative process, over time, becomes monotonous and unthinking.

⁴¹ Simone de Beauvoir, "The Independent Woman," in *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, 1 edition (New York: Vintage, 2011), 550.

Beauvoir describes this experience as an endless period of waiting, “for the water to boil, for the roast to be cooked just right [...]”⁴² This repetitive experience generated towards service to others works to limit the woman’s potential and imagination and relegates her to the private sphere of the domestic. She does not realize herself in relation to others and to the world but to the appliances and raw materials that populate her home; she is unconnected to the world and to her body. Too, this work goes unrewarded, labor that is not valued by society, and as her labor is soon consumed, Beauvoir states, “the saddest thing is that this work does not even result in a lasting creation.”⁴³ Though Knowles’ experience in 1962 as a young wife and soon to be mother never mimicked the experience Beauvoir writes of, it was a societal norm for women to be the cooks of their home, in charge of the food shopping and preparation of all meals during the 1960s. Even today, though the responsibility to cook may be somewhat more equal in heterosexual unions, the unseen labor of maintaining the pantry, doing the bulk of the food shopping, and keeping track of family member’s food preferences, is still assumed largely by the woman.⁴⁴

Counter to the traditional role that women assume, through *Make a Salad*, Knowles sensitizes us to the metaphysical aspects of quotidian life by performing an act of cooking that re-inscribes what it means and feels like to experience a new temporality that extends into the future, producing a lasting creation. While there are biological distinctions between men and women, namely the ability to bear children, the weight and oppression ascribed to these differences are amplified in and by the social context. The experience of many of Knowles’ works, whether it be a public performance, witnessing her work in an exhibition space, or privately discovering her work with one’s two hands, helps to amplify her message of breaking down the inscribed distinctions of sexual difference and challenges one’s conceptions of how the body is used in

⁴² Simone de Beauvoir, “The Married Woman,” in *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, 1 edition (New York: Vintage, 2011), 546.

⁴³ Beauvoir, 548.

⁴⁴ Ciciolla and Luthar, “Invisible Household Labor and Ramifications for Adjustment.”

space and through time. The work challenges the actions that we experience privately in the home and publicly. The score is not performed in a kitchen or even in a domestic setting— it is performed publicly. The work mobilizes the politicized space of womanhood—the home, and brings it into the public sphere, where she can engage with others, concentrate on her efforts, produce a creative work, and realize the specificity and abilities of her body. The event score produces “ontological thinking [...] it engages us in the opening wholeness of our being, and ‘takes place’ as much in the life of our feet and hands and eyes as it does in our head, our brains, or our mind.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, *Make a Salad* provides access to new meanings, sensations, and modes of perception engaging the viewer/performer directly in their own experience— a diverse route towards ontological knowledge and primary experience.

In the final chapter “The Independent Woman” of *The Second Sex* Beauvoir states that through work woman can realize her existing freedom. “When she is productive and active, she regains her transcendence; she affirms herself concretely as subject in her projects; she senses her responsibility relative to the goals she pursues and to the money and rights she appropriates.”⁴⁶ Knowles has presented to us a situation in which we can produce and embody a creative end that engages our body and can continually inform our everyday life; each time we engage with ourselves or with others is an opportunity for transformation. Moreover, she has created a situation of potential for women and anyone else who would like to perform the work, as the score presents an opportunity for revised concentration and experience. The sensations and qualities experienced in the work do not have to remain in the institution relegated to a wall, but can come home with us, and do in fact come home with you once ingested—it is an opportunity to review and revise the experience of being a woman. By using the objects of her daily life in tandem with patterns of ritual as fodder for artistic expression, Knowles provides an experience of possibility, intimacy with the self, and new access to freedom.

⁴⁵ Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 37.

⁴⁶ Beauvoir, “The Independent Woman,” 813.

CHAPTER III

PLEASE TOUCH THE ARTWORK: *POTAGE SEC*, FLUXUS AND THE ARCHIVE

“...humanity is something other than a species: it is a historical becoming.”⁴⁷

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

The origins of soup relate to the development of salad in fifteenth-century Milan. The dish which was often a fixture in grand dinner festivities was actually a type of soup or ragout, a hot liquid concoction that was flavored with “preserves, mustard and lemon, and decorated with marzipan.”⁴⁸ The warm sauce for this soup-like dish included a variety of pickled or salt-cured green vegetables and herbs that were at times accompanied by raw or blanched greens. The fifteenth century also saw the development of a salad dish that we might be able to recognize, strikingly different from the marzipan decorated ragout, which combined various raw vegetables in a dressing of vinegar and oil.⁴⁹ It seems logical that the origins of medieval salad might appear more soup-like, as the combination of water and vegetables, cereals, and meats, has been a part of the human experience, in the early forms of pit cooking, since prehistoric times.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, 1 edition (New York: Vintage, 2011), 753.

⁴⁸ Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat, *A History of Food*, 2nd edition (Chichester, West Sussex, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 695.

⁴⁹ Toussaint-Samat, 695.

⁵⁰ Xiaohong Wu et al., “Early Pottery at 20,000 Years Ago in Xianrendong Cave, China,” *Science* 336, no. 6089 (June 29, 2012): 1696–1700, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1218643>.

A study on early pottery upends the theories that earthenware was developed during the Neolithic Revolution by citing the discovery of pots found even earlier in the Xianrendong Cave, China dating to around 20,000 years ago during the late Pleistocene hunter-gatherer contexts in China, Japan, and Far East Russia.⁵¹ While this finding positions pot cooking earlier in human history than initially thought, there are arguments that the development of soup, and “pit” cooking, precede even these recent findings as there is evidence to suggest that early humans were pit cooking long before the development of pots.⁵² Unlike the process of roasting meat, which was our first culinary achievement, pit or pot cooking was a major human triumph that produced a “new range of nutritional and culinary possibilities.”⁵³ Knowles’ work, *Potage Sec*, in its direct relationship to cooking, and specifically pot cooking, situates our experience within the long line of human ingenuity that has enabled us to be more fully human by activating the prehistoric link between the culinary and the evolutionary.

The most precious commodity known to man is time; we are always searching for, don’t have enough of, are running out of, time. Time is also the critical component in soup, allowing a chemical reaction to occur that transforms the fibers of raw meats and vegetables into a nutritious and chewable substance. The time given to cooking a soup also provides the opportunity for the elements to exchange their molecules, creating a new product altogether: soup becomes an edible gestalt. Akin to the time soup demands, Knowles is also asking for our time as we move through the Pyrex glass container, touching, looking, and discovering, each distinct object she chose to include. Not unlike the process of cooking, by requiring the element of time to discover and experience *Potage Sec*, Knowles is asking us to invest in and nourish ourselves.

This chapter considers how Knowles’ 1989 work, *Potage Sec* (figure 6), complicates the traditional object-oriented status of artworks and how this serves as a means for unmanning the

⁵¹ Wu et al.

⁵² Janet Clarkson, *Soup: A Global History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 21.

⁵³ Clarkson, 19.

medium and established methods of exhibition and collection. The work recovers “the continuity of lived experience with the normal processes of living” as it recalls and directly relates to the transformational process of cooking, with the name itself meaning “dry soup.”⁵⁴ The works’ relationship to the alchemical manifestations alive in the culinary process provide the viewer with a relatable metaphor with which to grasp the metamorphic qualities alive in the practice of everyday life.

Potage Sec is a study in phenomenological experience of the transcendental banal, presenting the viewer with an opportunity for primary experience as they discover the work, piece by piece. For our purposes, the notion of primary experience relies on American pragmatist, John Dewey’s unification of primary and secondary experience, or the physical sensation of something coupled with the intellectual understanding of it.⁵⁵ This chapter looks to Dewey’s writings in *Art as Experience* (1934) to understand the heuristic thrust of Knowles’ work. Dewey’s foundational theories in Pragmatism, which stressed the rational application of ideas and concepts, prioritizing action and experience over fixed universalism proposed that all things are subject to change and *do* change—much like the transformation raw ingredients experience when added to a soup. Furthermore, Dewey suggested that in a world rife with contingency, humans were purposeful agents of change.⁵⁶ Written on aesthetics, *Art as Experience* proposes a shift of perspective: art was no longer about the object but about the process of experience. The artist was not a producer but a facilitator of that experience, providing expanded access to the senses through new ideas and thereby encouraging holistic corporeal participation on part of the viewer. To evoke an experience in the audience provided a transformational and lasting impact, infusing art and its reception with more power and pedagogical strength. Knowles and Fluxus artists wanted

⁵⁴ John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 1 edition (New York, NY: TarcherPerigee, 2005), 10.

⁵⁵ Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 36.

⁵⁶ Thomas S. Popkewitz, “The Double Gestures of Cosmopolitanism and Comparative Studies of Education,” in *International Handbook of Comparative Education*, Springer International Handbooks of Education (Springer, Dordrecht, 2009), 390, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-6403-6_25.

aesthetic experience to as closely approximate ordinary perception and sensory experience as possible, to erase the difference between art and life. The theoretical goal of generating such a processual experience, was to create the conditions for an encounter with primary experience free of social conditioning.

Knowles' practice and the wider Fluxus tradition is a commitment to participation, interdisciplinary experimentation, and play, which articulates a commitment to new ideas, unencumbered by traditional structures. The artwork, of which *Potage Sec* is a prime example, is not hung on a wall to be looked at, placed on a pedestal to be viewed, or even played by an orchestra to be listened to; they are intermedia works that require and elicit direct engagement. In order to view *Potage Sec*, one *must* touch the work; it is a critical component to the piece. This, is why Fluxus matters—not for its historical artifacts, but through the expansive experiential potential Fluxus artworks and concepts can have on our lives today.⁵⁷ Because of this, *Potage Sec*, like many Fluxus artworks, presents very real issues for institutional archives and collectors: how does one interact with a work that is meant to be touched and/or performed and how does an institution exhibit and archive an artwork that requires direct corporeal experience? The act of resisting traditional methods of aesthetic experience and institutional collection, is a way of challenging, or *unmanning*, the persistent confines of archival and exhibition systems.

The term *unmanning* derives from art historian, Julia Robinson's 2004 essay, "The Sculpture of Indeterminacy: Alison Knowles's Beans and Variations," in which she uses the concept of "unmanning" as a way to discuss Knowles' relationship to John Cage.⁵⁸ Robinson argues that the term *unmanning* (*Entmannung*), taken from Eric Santner's 1996 book *My Own*

⁵⁷ Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*.

⁵⁸ Robinson, "The Sculpture of Indeterminacy," 16. Taken from Santner's conception of the word "investiture" as a conflict that relates to shifts in an individual's relationship to social and institutional authority, Robinson first used the term *Entmannung* and "symbolic investiture" as a way to describe Cage's practice. Robinson argues that Cage's interventions in the institution of music relate to the psychoanalytic case of Daniel Paul Schreber, as Cage would take hold of the symbolic order of musical composition and redefine the creative act, eliciting lasting repercussions on modern art, as seen in the work of Fluxus artist.

Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber's Secret History of Modernity, is a more appropriate term for Knowles' project than "feminizing the medium" as the artist's work is in favor of radical openness rather than a fixed or defined system. The term can gesture back to the discussion of *Make a Salad* and Simon de Beauvoir in chapter one as this openness, or unmanning, relates to the productive aspects of becoming un-Othered. Becoming un-Othered or unmanned, is a positive project of recovering and rediscovering the body in the world unencumbered by conditions. However, aside from the term's feminist implications, as a way to describe Knowles' work as moving away from feminine essentialism and towards freedom, this chapter will use the term unmanning as a way to describe Knowles' and Fluxus' interventions in codified systems of experiencing and exhibiting art. "Hence, the term *Entmannung*, which also transcends the literalness it might first suggest, comes to imply the unraveling of institutions at large (gender being the primary one)."⁵⁹ We see in the work of Knowles a deep connection to the process of dismantling or unmanning systems; *Potage Sec* remains a critical example of the ways in which her work opens the body up to holistic experience of an art object, resisting the traditional behaviors one is trained to engage in when relating to artwork.

Potage Sec

Potage Sec is a work housed within a glass Pyrex casserole with a matching lid. The artwork wants to be handled: the container itself, has handles on both sides, enabling the user to pick it up and move it from cabinet to stove to sink, or in our case from the self it may have been placed on to a table for discovery. Upon opening the lid, the viewer is met with a list of objects printed on a piece of transparency paper. The list is as follows:

1. Five finger bags sewn shut with objects inside spelling
T O U C H
2. Three seconds of time (hourglass)
3. Lightbulb

⁵⁹ Robinson, 16.

4. “fantastic dream: single finger nail
5. Rectangular mirror
6. Tiger-striped bean from Hamburg, Germany
7. Green glass fragment found on Greene street
8. Copper washer
9. Red button
10. 500 lira coin with braille
11. Lima bean embedded in paper
12. Biondi bean from Cento
13. Scarlet runner bean from middle America
14. One corn kernel
15. Black glass shard
16. Rye grass
17. One favella bean
18. A wood fragment from Josef frame shop, NYC
19. Stone in shape of javelin from Hudson River
20. Quipu letter (colored knot necklace) a grocery list from Incas or Peru (1430 A.D.)
 - Blue – produce prices 203
 - Green – meat prices 23
 - Yellow – grocery prices
2. Yellow side cord means
all items on the strand are taxable
21. Beans: pinto, red kidney, black, white navy, green splits, red lentils, aduki
22. Lower layers include: sphagnum, gravel, white marble chips, terra cotta shard
24. Cork with braille reading “one”

Not unlike the process of making a soup, *Potage Sec* presents us with a sculptural time piece providing an opportunity for discovery and transformation. *Potage Sec* offers the viewer an opportunity for primary experience: to touch and feel, look, listen, and consider the various ingredients, investing the viewer with an encounter of their own becoming. Knowles’ work begs to be experienced, and *Potage Sec* is no exception. Unlike most artwork, touch is a necessary element to the perceptual experience: one must touch each object as they move through the Pyrex, searching through rocks, beans, and small found fragments to find the articles listed on the transparency. Though performative in its own right, as the work demands physical action through time, *Potage Sec* is intended for personal rather than collective engagement as experienced with *Make a Salad*.

The first item on the list, “five finger bags sewn shut with objects inside spelling T O U C H (figure 7), are 5 small bags made from natural fibers and dyed in ascending colors going from pale salmon color for T to deep a burgundy eggplant color for the letter H. Each bag which is

sewn closed has a letter printed on its face and contains a concealed object that begins with that letter. The TOUCH bags are similar to an earlier piece by Knowles called *English Alphabet Bags* (1988). The twenty-six bags, which accompany Knowles' *A Finger Book 3* (1988) (figure 8, 9), each contain an object that begins with the letter printed on the bag: the A bag contains an almond, the M bag contains matches, and the V bag holds vitamins. *A Finger Book 3* contains a key for the viewer, listing each object with its corresponding letter. While we are not given a key for the TOUCH bags, the experience of feeling, smelling, and considering the shape, weight, and contents of each bag is a primary experience of encounter with one's whole body, relying on senses and mind to complete the piece.

Number 20 on the list is a "Quipu letter (colored knot necklace) a grocery list from Incas or Peru (1430 A.D.)" (figure 10). Knowles indicates that the blue string designates produce prices, the green signifies meat prices, and the yellow side cord stands for the taxable items purchased. Quipu letters, also spelled Khipu and called talking knots, were accounting devices made from string historically used by the ancient Inca in Andean South America. The recording devices were used for collecting data and keeping records of tax obligations, food provision inventories, census records, military organization, and calendrical information. A recent discovery of quipus that had been guarded by Andean elders since the Spanish colonial period suggest that the knots were used for far greater means as devices for encoding historical and biographical information and a way to maintain secrecy in the presence of Spanish colonialists.⁶⁰ Though there is a series of complex color combinations between the strings allowing for 95 unique cord patterns, Knowles' quipu is a simpler and more relatable version of the device. For the uninformed viewer, Knowles provides a clue that gestures towards the function of the knotted string; the quipu housed within *Potage Sec* is a shopping list, signifying the knots role as an accountant for life itself. Like a soup that over a long period of time experiences a reduction of

⁶⁰ "Discovery May Help Decipher Ancient Inca String Code," National Geographic News, April 19, 2017, <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/04/inca-khipus-code-discovery-peru/>.

liquid and concentration of flavor, many of the pieces within *Potage Sec* speak to the reduction of language and the concentration of sensation. How far can one reduce words, what is a word's beginning, and what does it "feel like, sound, hear, and look like?"⁶¹ And how far can one distill their felt experience to shed automatic response and conditioning?

By the time Fluxus artists had descended on the neighborhood of SoHo, New York, the grand cast iron buildings that had once housed various manufacturing and dry-goods businesses were slowly deteriorating, a situation that led the area to be known as Hell's Hundred Acres, due to all the small fires that populated the buildings. A practice Knowles developed from her early days in SoHo when most of the lofts were vacant spaces, was walking the streets looking for discarded objects, soles of shoes, and various knickknacks and detritus. Many objects she found in the streets and lofts were actually embedded into the cement floors of the sidewalks and empty loft spaces, a concept she later introduced into her work. A series of found objects and paper sculptures by Knowles from 2006 titled *Time Samples* contain such embeddings. One work within the series, is an instrument of sorts, *Azuki Bean Turner* (figure 11), is a maroon piece of air-dried paper that looks like the surface of the moon, with a rough undulating surface. Beans embedded within the fiber become a sound piece when picked up, turned, and activated, with the beans held within the paper medium shuffling and falling about within the sound maker. *Potage Sec* also contains two embeddings (figure 12). The first, number 11, a "lima bean embedded in paper," is a small piece of wrinkled semi-transparent white paper with a lima bean pressed within the paper fiber, one can literally see and feel the shape of the bean within the piece. Number 24 is another type of embedding, it is a piece of cork embedded with metal dots reading "one" in braille, another instance of the activation of sight and touch. In speaking about her work *Time Samples* with American artist and poet George Quasha, Knowles spoke of the significance of the found objects in her work:

⁶¹ "Alison Knowles," accessed March 7, 2019, <https://www.acknowles.com/fingerbook.html>.

I want the pieces to be studied, as if you had found this thing on the street and cleaned it up. Seeing them in an art context might involve an effort to see things as if thrown away. Discards are huge artifacts in our civilization, which tell us so much, and I find them for some reason worth looking at over and over again.⁶²

Worthy found objects don't just immediately make their way into a work of art. Knowles typically will place the days findings on her living room coffee table, moving various objects into groups, separating them again, and considering their look, value, and essence. If they are lucky, they are plucked from the table and incorporated into her work. The process of living with these found remnants of human activity informs which piece they might pair well with, enhance, or complete.

The found objects Knowles collects, and those that are included in *Potage Sec*, not only present us with social artifacts that speak to our way of life, activities and habits, but also address what is thrown away and discarded. The combination of found parts create a sensory language that describes what life was like and what was valued and devalued during her lifetime. By collecting and presenting us with objects both made, selected, and found, Knowles presents us with a moment of reconsideration, why were these objects chosen, brought together and valued? Knowles wants us to ponder, in our hands, eyes and mind, the significance and sensation of the selected remnants and remains, the objects relate to "the part of art that is reclamation."⁶³ The work however is not only a collection of objects but also a collection of actions or performance, as the work must be felt and discovered by the viewer; an essential component of the work is direct engagement and experience.

What a culture leaves behind can tell us much about their daily life, their activities, and value systems. Garbage collection and disposal is not only a contemporary issue, though we have reached new levels of waste with our single-use plastic items, this problem was a chronic issue in

⁶² George Quasha, "Time Samples," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 19, no. 3 (November 1, 2009): 299–300, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07407700903399326>.

⁶³ Quasha, 305.

large cities across the Roman Empire. A pot of soup speaks to unwanted elements of food, items cast to the side, poor cuts of meat, nearly rotten or partially used vegetables. Defined by their humble origins, soups have the power to fully transform undesirable ingredients into a delicious and nutritious substance. This is not unlike the process that Knowles employs in much of her work, *Potage Sec* included. It is the combining, considering, and transformation of humble and discarded parts that are transformed into a new individual experience. Once one uncovers the objects within *Potage Sec*, be it a small bean, lightbulb, or 500 lira coin, one reconsiders their own waste, that one dry bean left in the canister at home, the small pouch of foreign coins you will never use but can't seem to let go of; after experiencing the work, are they renewed with meaning and value?

In discussing the objects used in Fluxus work, the art historian Kristine Stiles has stated that the performative features of objects “reinforce consciousness of body enactments and raise questions both about the cultural status and use of objects and, by extension, the status and function of human behavior.”⁶⁴ In other words, how objects connect us to our bodies and what types and classes of objects we culturally and socially value, inform our behavior and comportment. She continues,

Furthermore, since art objects are coveted and endowed with an economic value and with ritual and class status, the performative element required by objects in a Fluxus event provides information about how human action itself is classed, socially prescribed, and valued. Such themes then invoke meditation on how both objects and acts relate to political and ideological constructions that structure social ceremonies, institutions, and practices.⁶⁵

Potage Sec encourages one to consider the objects they are tied to, personally and culturally. Which objects are deemed replaceable and irreplaceable? The work also presents us with a radical opportunity for direct primary experience, you must touch the work, take

⁶⁴ Stiles, “Between Water and Stone; Fluxus Performance, A Metaphysics of Acts,” 89.

⁶⁵ Stiles, 89.

everything out of the Pyrex, search through the sphagnum, gravel, terra cotta shards, and beans to find the “red button”, “rectangular mirror”, “lightbulb” and “three seconds of time (hourglass)”. The work upends our conditioned experience of viewing art by putting the object directly into our hands, to touch, experience, and discover.

Fluxus and the Archive

Published in the April 1973 *Fluxnewsletter* sent to all of the current Fluxus associates, George Maciunas, the de facto impresario of Fluxus, requested information from each artist to include in his latest project, the *Diagram of Historical Development of Fluxus and Other 4 Dimensional, Aural, Optic, Olfactory, Epithelial, and Tactile Art Forms (Incomplete)*, 1973. (figure 13). Though marked by Maciunas as incomplete, the diagram offers an exhaustive account of the artistic descent, influences, and ultimate development of Fluxus, beginning with church processions, Roman circuses, and Byzantine Iconoclasm. What the Fluxus diagram tells us, apart from illustrating the concurrent artistic movements and cultural phenomena that are typically contemplated distinctly, is where the roots of Fluxus can be found. This art historical exercise, which manifests as a pedagogical device, shows the non-linear genealogy of Fluxus; tracing the convergence and divergence with historical movements and phenomenon, it is both a chart explicating influence and an intervention in the totalizing narrative of art history. Furthermore, the title of the chart clearly indicates the intermedia and multisensory based artwork made by Fluxus artists. Knowles’ work is a prime example of such artwork that meanders through various mediums, eliciting responses from various physiological senses.

Located in the top eighth portion of the chart, centered in the middle of the page, John Cage appears (figure 14). This is not a coincidental placement, for while Maciunas explicitly included the influence of Dada, Surrealism, Futurist theater, vaudeville, Marcel Duchamp, and the Bauhaus, in the upper section, no other movement or person is as centrally located as Cage.

The presence of Cage in the chart signifies his undeniable influence on the theoretical underpinnings and actions taken by Fluxus. Indeed, Cage's experiments in chance operations, indeterminacy, and commitment to the quotidian were foundational antecedents to Fluxus. Furthermore, primary experience over artistic commodity, which was so highly valued in the Fluxus project, articulates a commitment to experience-based processes, as seen in the work of Knowles.

Even as Maciunas carefully considered the historical position and significance of Fluxus in concert with the development of the avant-garde, in many respects, Fluxus, and Knowles' work purposefully resists art historical canonization. While Fluxus has seen greater incorporation into the canon, largely due to the acquisition of major Fluxus collections such as the Jean Brown Papers at The Getty Research Institute and the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection housed at The Museum of Modern Art, there is still much debate as to what should be done with the work of Fluxus artists particularly when included in exhibition; Knowles work is no exception. As she has stated in an interview with George Myers, Jr:

My objects are never under glass and are always old and handle-able. They easily break, get lost and pass out of my environment. I don't necessarily share them as art; rather I use them to make sounds, have them around for a while and they pass along [...] As I pick up these things—mostly on Greene Street where I live—a transformation process begins. If they last a week on my table they have become contemporary gems [...] The art-life dialogue fleshes each other out.⁶⁶

Knowles' and Fluxus work disrupt traditional exhibition practices and viewing practices by prioritizing engagement with the viewer's senses. The works is not meant to be encased within a vitrine with a conventional didactic, but rather insists on being held and experienced first-hand.

Derived from the Latin word *fluere* meaning "to flow," Fluxus suggests a changing state.

As explicated by Maciunas in his 1963 *Fluxus Manifesto*, one of Fluxus' main objectives were to

⁶⁶ George Myers Jr, ed., "Alison Knowles: To See Clearly and Afresh Each Moment," in *Alphabets Sublime: Contemporary Artists on Collage and Visual Literature* (Washington, D.C: Paycock Press, 1986), 51.

challenge and undermine the traditional notions of art as commodity and the artist as ultimate producer. Maciunas' goals from the start were "'social (not aesthetic)' and concerned with the 'gradual elimination of the fine arts,'" Maciunas strived to bring life into art and art into the everyday.⁶⁷ Fluxus artists "circumvented conventional institutions of art in an effort to reach the public directly... they succeeded in bypassing the museum and the art market, creating instead their own venues for performances, exhibitions, and the sale of their work."⁶⁸ This is evidenced by their early performances in various concert halls in Europe from 1961-1962, the Fluxshop located on Canal Street in SoHo, New York where they tried to sell their works (unsuccessfully) for about one year, and the Fluxus mail-order catalogue where patrons could purchase work directly.⁶⁹

Establishing its performative base, Fluxus formally took shape in September of 1962 in a series of concerts held across Europe in Wiesbaden, Düsseldorf, Amsterdam, London, and Paris. Nam June Paik, Alison Knowles, Emmet Williams, Benjamin Patterson, Dick Higgins, and George Maciunas were among the players in this initial embodiment of Fluxus. These concerts positioned Fluxus as the first resolutely international art movement with Fluxus associates from across Europe, Japan, and America. In Fluxus, a Zen-like or vaudevillian playfulness was favored over conventional artistic mastery and technique. The idea of the collective, both in the non-authorship of work and the emphasis on collaboration, was foundational. A jovial spirit was injected into the first Fluxus Festival of New Music in Wiesbaden, Germany in 1962 and the many iterations of the festival that followed. Many of the most recognizable Fluxus event scores were first performed at these concerts including George Brecht's *Drip Music*, Alison Knowles's

⁶⁷ Walker Art Center, "Fluxus and the Museum," in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Elizabeth Armstrong, First edition (Minneapolis: Distributed Art Pub Inc, 1993), 16.

⁶⁸ Center, 16.

⁶⁹ Emmett Williams, Ann Noel, and Ay-O, eds., *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas 1931-1978*, y First edition edition (New York, N.Y: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 114.

Nivea Cream Piece, Philip Corner's *Piano Activities*, George Maciunas' *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* and La Monte Young's *Composition #10, Draw a Straight Line and Follow It*.

La Monte Young's 1960 event score, *Composition #10, Draw a Straight Line and Follow It*, is a prime example of the challenges to archival practices such work maintains. Performed by Nam June Paik at the first Fluxus festival in Wiesbaden, Paik adapted this score and reinterpreted the piece as *Zen for Head*, (1962) in which, positioned in front a long piece of paper, he initially dunked his tie, then his head in a bucket of paint and dragged his body along the length of the paper creating a line. Is *Zen for Head* now an object, as the paper artifact of the performance does exist? Should the work be attributed to Paik or Young? Does each successive performance of the score constitute a work of art? "The terminology needed to describe this new form—and much of the work created by Fluxus artists—has yet to be found or agreed upon, and it is one of the reasons that Fluxus has been notoriously difficult to discuss, collect, and display."⁷⁰ If we think back to Knowles' *Make a Salad*, similar questions abound. Does the work maintain the same iconoclastic spirit it elicited in its first performance in 1962? What does the work mean to audiences now, nearly sixty years later? Should the collection of the objects used in the performance, like the salad bowl or tongs, be seen as artifacts of the piece, meant for exhibition? Or would this serve as the works ultimate failure?

Potage Sec much like early Fluxkits, were designed to be small collections of curated objects for personal engagement. *Fluxus I* (1965), the first Fluxkit, is a collection of small-scale artworks, objects, event scores, and texts from a variety of artists (figure 15). The Fluxkit suitcase contains an eclectic mix of works, including Mieko Shiomi's elegant sculpture *Endless Box* (1965), which is a series of thirty-three folded paper boxes nested within each other like a matryoshka doll, topped with a wooden lid, and Alison Knowles piece *Bean Rolls* (1965) a non-linear sculptural book in the form of a small metal tin containing dried beans and long scrolls

⁷⁰ Center, "Fluxus and the Museum," 14.

with printed text detailing various facts and folkloric information about beans (figure 16).

Fluxkits were an effort to not only contradict framed pieces on a wall but to engage people through their sense of touch. The objects, events score cards, and texts were meant to be held, opened, read, and played with. Fluxkits, like most Fluxus work, was not meant to be precious: items could be replaced if something within the kit was lost, like a ball or die.⁷¹ The editions were not meant to sit on a shelf and were not a part of a vitrine concept; although that is how they are exhibited now, they were intended for the private exploration of the viewer. *Fluxus I*, like *Potage Sec*, showcases the commitment to primary experience, as the various items in the kit produce multisensory, experiential information. The work provides access to new ideas, sensations, and modes of perception engaging the viewer directly in their own lived experience.

The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection was donated to the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2008. After five years of preparations, the archives were finally open to the public for research in 2013. MoMA adopted the Silverman's position regarding the years of Fluxus, the role of George Maciunas, and the intricacies of the inventory system designed by the Silverman's and Jon Hendricks as detailed in the *Fluxus Codex* (1988), a massive encyclopedic catalog of every object, text, and score, within the collection. Upon receiving the acquisition, MoMA decided to split the collection into three parts: all artworks are housed within the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, documentation of Fluxus activities and production went to the Museum Archives, and publications are located in the Library. As evidenced by the Museum's announcement of the archives opening, they have asked many of the same questions this chapter: what are the categories and ways to distinguish artwork from ephemera and documents, how do you successfully exhibit a performance work when all that remains is scant documentation, and how do you deal with a work when it is supposed to be touched?

⁷¹ The Museum of Modern Art, *Alison Knowles Discusses the Fluxkit*, accessed December 14, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPi0UyHB95U>.

Such ambiguities are particularly challenging for an institution like MoMA where intermedia artworks do not fit neatly into one department or another and when documentation or an artifact from a performance now functions as an artwork or vice versa. The process of researching in the archive is similarly challenging, as many works were produced as multiples but never numbered, or proposed but never produced, or various works of the same title might be made over a long period of time with slight variations. It is, at times, difficult to know what you might even be looking at and where the work begins and ends. However, the experience of being in the archive with Fluxus work is revelatory; objects and event scores that looked amusing, humorous, or sensitive in photographs, are fully engaged when they are used as intended. The sensorial stimulations one experiences when interacting with Fluxus works is unlike looking at a sculpture or painting, one fully grasps the transformative nature of these simple scores and objects. A critical question for Fluxus work now is how it should be exhibited as touch is such a critical component to the work.

The exhibition *Fluxus: A Conceptual Country* (1992), curated by Dr. Estera Milman, examined the international network of artists and the historical landscape of Fluxus. The exhibition included Fluxus objects, publications, performance scores and relics, bookworks, mail-art, and multiples. After opening at Franklin Furnace, New York, the exhibition traveled to the Madison Art Center, University of Iowa, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts and Northwestern University. The most innovative aspect of the exhibition was the development of a virtual reality NeXT computer prototype called *FluxBase*. The program virtually simulated the experience of interacting with a Fluxus artwork. Viewers could select a Fluxkit in the program, open the suitcase, select an object within the kit to view and move around, view its components, information about the artwork and the artist who produced it.

The impetus for creating this program was initiated in 1989 by Milman in a conference she mounted titled *Art Networks and Information Systems*, in collaboration with the Franklin

Furnace Archive. Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the University of Iowa, the goal of the attendees, which included librarians, museum conservators, artists and technologists from MoMA, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Research Libraries Group, the Library of Congress, the J. Paul Getty Art History Information Program, and the Stanford University Libraries, was to seek better ways of garnering and sharing information about non-traditional artforms, like Fluxus, which do not easily adhere to traditional cataloging and archival methods. *FluxBase* was created out of the discussions at the conference to help mitigate the challenges of experiencing and understanding the work in the way it was meant to be felt.

While *FluxBase* presents exhibition attendees with an innovative and interactive program, the rest of the exhibition was traditionally based, presenting texts, works, and documents in frames behind glass and objects within vitrines. An exhibition counter to this more traditional design is the Tate Modern's 2008 Fluxus festival, *UBS Opening: The Long Weekend – States of Flux* (figure 17, 18, 19). This exhibition presented a number of Fluxus works to a live audience including Knowles' *Proposition #2, Make a Salad* (1962). Also presented in the Tate festival was a series of works titled, *Flux Olympiad* which are well-known games with a bizarre Flux-twist. Many of the games were re-imaginings or revived iterations of Fluxus games, such as Larry Miller's *Vegetable Chess*. The Tate Modern's *Flux-Olympiad* marked the realization of an idea first conceived, but never fulfilled, by George Maciunas. Responding to the Tate's collection display *States of Flux*, which included a significant amount of Fluxus archival material, *The Long Weekend*, and particularly the *Flux-Olympiad*, explored the history of the movement through the reimagining and performing of Fluxus works. Considering the fact that most museum attendees and art enthusiasts will never actually have the opportunity to touch a Fluxus art object, this exhibition, with its radical participatory component offers one of the best examples of how contemporary audiences can and should interact with Fluxus works: in live, participatory, performance-based experiences that engage their whole body.

The Tate's staging of *Flux-Olympiad* and *Make a Salad*, along with a traditional object-oriented museum exhibition, honored the performative legacy of Fluxus. "Fluxus performance must not only be conceptualized in terms of its relationship to the production of Fluxus objects, but must be rethought in terms of the identity of Fluxus itself[...] Fluxus as a social entity must be regarded as a performance."⁷² The Tate's presentation championed the early spirit of Fluxus which was dedicated to producing performative events and exercises that focus the body at the center of experience, able to reflect on its own state of being and that of others. Moreover, the experience generated connects itself to all aspects of our daily lives, it's is not something housed in a museum, behind glass, and protected by docents— it is a living and breathing entity, a new system of belief and becoming that reinscribes life into the body.

A more recent example of an approach to alternative ways to exhibit Fluxus work was Art by Translation's current research and exhibition program focused on Knowles' work, *House of Dust*.⁷³ The piece from 1967 was initially a poetry project created by Knowles and James Tenney using the Siemens 4004 computer and the Fortran language. The work is among the earliest computerized poems and comprises the phrase "a house of" followed by a computer-generated randomized sequence of a material, a site or situation, or a light source, and its inhabitants. For example, "A house of dust/ on open ground/ lit by natural light/ inhabited by friends and enemies," is a stanza generated in the score. After receiving a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1968, Knowles reinterpreted the poem into a physical structure in Chelsea, New York, which was destroyed within a year. Upon receiving an invitation to teach at CalArts in Burbank, California, Knowles reimagined and recreated the house on the CalArts campus where

⁷² Alison Knowles and Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, *Indigo island : art works* (Saarbrücken : Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, 1995), 31, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/43277791>.

⁷³ "Art by Translation," accessed March 10, 2019, <https://www.artbytranslation.org/exhibitions/201902-mak-center/introduction>. Art by Translation is a research and exhibition program initiated by the École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts de Paris-Cergy and the École Supérieure d'Art et de Design TALM-Angers, directed by Maud Jacquin and Sébastien Pluot, founding directors and Jeff Guess, pedagogical director. It is supported by the French Ministry of Culture and collaborates with a host of international academic and art institutions. Organized in sessions dedicated to specific research themes, this itinerant program takes place at different sites in Europe and North America.

she taught classes from 1970-1972. Using *House of Dust* as the case study for research, the artists, students, and scholars involved in Art by Translation's initiative have developed artistic and curatorial projects, events, and publications in collaboration with art institutions and schools. Most recently, a session at CalArts which included seminars, performances, and a symposium, inaugurated a year of collective research and subsequent exhibition at the MAK Center for Art and Architecture at the Schindler House in Los Angeles.

The exhibition at the Schindler House titled *Shelter or Playground: The House of Dust at the Schindler House*, which runs from February 9 – June 2, 2019, features performances and interpretations of scores by Knowles, Yoko Ono, Merce Cunningham, and various other artists from the period. The theoretical thrust of the exhibition is to reimagine, interpret, and activate the productive potential of Knowles' work and "catalyze interrogations of wider aesthetic and social issues through several disciplines, creating new forms and communities."⁷⁴ The location of the Schindler House, an early modernist home in Los Angeles, as the site for the exhibition, represents the commitment that both structures maintain as "alternatives to functionalist architecture and conventional behavior." In this collaborative exhibition, one can physically grasp with their whole body the range and potential that Knowles' work maintains. The ability to generate positive projects that inform the body and expand into the future is fully realized while challenging the very nature of art's singularity, its need to be unreproducible and unique. The ability to reperform and interpret Fluxus works and Knowles' scores maintain the works relevance from the 1960s to the present moment, to be experienced by a new generation of people. The strength of Knowles' work is its ability to inform one's life through time through direct engagement and experience; it is meant to live outside of the archive and in our bodies, not within a glass case in an institution.

⁷⁴ "Shelter or Playground | MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles," accessed March 10, 2019, <https://makcenter.org/programming/house-of-dust/>.

Knowles has said that her “Fluxus involves performance as its major ingredient.”⁷⁵ In discussing the spirit of art and of Fluxus, Knowles has compared her activities to that of cooking, one “tries to interrupt and disrupt the boundary between inside and outside [...]. It’s not unlike a soup...”⁷⁶ By using the objects of her daily life in tandem with patterns of ritual as fodder for artistic expression, Knowles provides an experience of possibility, intimacy with the self, and new access to freedom. Collapsing the boundary between high and low art, between art and life, artist and participant—the work becomes a radical gesture of unmanning; Knowles’ work challenges prescribed conditions, be they based in gender conformity or larger systemic social or institutional structures. In discussing the performative element central to Knowles’ work, Robinson’s links the creation of meaning to the specificity and sensorial capacities of each body:

Performativity works to fight reification, and in the case of Knowles, this work becomes more fully developed in the register of performance itself. If one can think of “performative performance”—performance that literally *un-performs* an existing attribution of meaning, or reinvents a lost relationship with objects—then one can begin to appreciate this operative register in Knowles’s work as well as the stakes of such a project. It is precisely what performance affords, the way it thickens the experience of things, sounds, bodies, and words, that has made it such a durable structure for Knowles.⁷⁷

This is precisely why the unmanning of the archive is so integral to the experience of Knowles’ work. The performative structure that is felt in her event scores, sculptural work, and print work asks the viewer to engage and revisit their own body and senses and how that process may unperform or undo unnatural conditions that have been absorbed and repeated in the body.

Given that Fluxus worked so hard to align art with the everyday, to prioritize direct experience, and break the traditional boundaries of how art is made, who can make it, where and how it is displayed, sold, and collected, it is ironic that it has been welcomed by so many institutions internationally. “In the rush to exhibit, historicize, and theorize the profuse production

⁷⁵ Kaplan et al., “Flux Generations,” 9.

⁷⁶ Knowles et al., “Art as Spiritual Practice,” 20.

⁷⁷ Robinson, “The Sculpture of Indeterminacy,” 107.

of Fluxus, the critical content of Fluxus objects themselves equally threatens to be lost. For the telling element in the Fluxus object is its relationship to performative acts whether mundane or quixotic.”⁷⁸ The act of direct corporeal engagement is what completes the work, activates it, and has the potential to inform our way of thinking and acting. This component of Knowles’ work must be a priority for curators, as the physical interaction and engagement is the work, that which completes it, is a necessary component to its structure. Without allowing for some component within an exhibition to be sensorially felt by the viewer a piece of the work is essentially lost and left incomplete.

⁷⁸ Knowles and Saarbrücken, *Indigo island*, 30.

CHAPTER IV

SPECTRAL EARTH IN BREAD AND WATER

Bread is the result of the process of baking
Turn over a load of homemade bread
And see the constellations of the night sky? The shell of
A tortoise with oracle breaks? Or the rivers of the planet.
Alison Knowles, *Bread and Water*⁷⁹

In December of 1988 the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environmental Program established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The stated purpose of the IPCC was to provide unpartisan scientific information regarding climate change through reports released in 1990, 1995, 2001, and 2007.⁸⁰ Published in January of 1989, Time Magazine's person of the year for 1988 was the endangered earth. The January issue was dedicated to the urgent crisis of climate change. The issue was aided by 33 scientists, administrators, and political leaders who were invited to a three-day conference in Boulder, CO to explore the interconnected problems of climate change, population, waste management, and preservation of resources and species. The consultants offered a variety of ideas, solutions, and suggestions that TIME magazine organized into an agenda for environmental action.⁸¹ On April 22, 1990, more than 140 countries celebrated the 20th anniversary of Earth Day, calling attention

⁷⁹ Alison Knowles, "Alison Knowles, Bread and Water Documents," 1991, Emily Harvey Foundation.

⁸⁰ "The Nobel Peace Prize 2007," NobelPrize.org, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2007/ipcc/facts/>. The last assessment report, published in 2007 won the organization a Nobel Peace Prize for their work to develop and disseminate greater awareness and knowledge about man-made climate change and to provide a rubric for the required measures to counteract and respond to that change.

⁸¹ Thomas A. Sancton, "Planet Of The Year: What on EARTH Are We Doing?," *Time*, accessed April 11, 2019, <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,956627-2,00.html>.

to environmental issues during the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Brazil. And by 1991 78% of Americans identified as environmentalists according to a Gallup Poll. To give this percentage perspective, in 2016 just 42% of Americans identified as such.⁸²

Environmentalism is haunted by anxiety and ruin. The modern environmental movement was in part caused by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), the same year as Knowles' score *Make a Salad* was first conceived and performed. Carson uncovered the overt overuse of pesticides in American agriculture and found that the amount of DDT discovered in human tissue had tripled between 1950-1962, linking their use to a variety of hazards to life on earth, including that of humans.⁸³ The ghost of the earth's demise (or human's ability for life on it) looms large over environmental awareness and activism. Climate change is an existential threat to our humanity that insists on receptivity to the earth's precarious preciousness and though environmental disasters are becoming more frequent and pronounced, acceptance of the issue at times requires one's imagination to see into a compromised future. The threat of climate change is both undeniably present and unfathomably abstract.

The term hauntology, coined by Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx* (1993), refers to the situation of sequential, historical, and ontological incoherence in which the so-called presence of being, or being itself, is replaced by the figure of a ghost, a phantom entity rife with ambiguity being neither present nor absent, dead or alive, tangible nor intangible. The notion of a specter leads one to consider the trace, similar to the methods of deconstruction, a trace is an ambiguous entity, the inherent meaning resides in what something isn't rather than what it is—the absence of presence. For Derrida, the belief in ghosts is irrelevant; the interest is the opening of meaning, an indeterminate procedure, rather than a determined endpoint. It is with this understanding of the

⁸² Gallup Inc, "Americans' Identification as 'Environmentalists' Down to 42%," Gallup.com, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/190916/americans-identification-environmentalists-down.aspx>.

⁸³ Eliza Griswold, "How 'Silent Spring' Ignited the Environmental Movement," *The New York Times*, September 21, 2012, sec. Magazine, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/23/magazine/how-silent-spring-ignited-the-environmental-movement.html>.

word hauntology, as it refers to both the notions of ambiguity and certainty, that we can understand Knowles' piece *Bread and Water* as an indeterminate work haunted with the spectre of the earth and one's place in it.

Hauntology becomes a place to examine our relationship to the past but more importantly, to explore our own identity, and the boundaries in between. Through the earth-bound temporal procedures of the work which include Knowles' chosen printmaking processes, the Xeroxing or photographic process, breadmaking, and the performative nature of the work itself which is grounded in the rivers of the earth, the viewer is compelled to consider place as a new epistemology or system of belief. Belief in *Bread and Water* manifests in the acceptance in environmental precariousness and a belief in one's ability to create a connection to the world through time in doing and making.

Bread and Water is a multidimensional artwork: it is a series of palladium prints produced in 1991, a group of sound-performance-objects presented in her *Bread and Water* exhibition in 1992 at the Emily Harvey Foundation in New York, a radio broadcasted performance at WDR in Koln in 1994, and a book titled *Bread and Water* (1995) (figure 20, 21). The book form of *Bread and Water* presents the loaves of bread with accompanying text compiled from a variety of sources including Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1387), *The Journals of Henry David Thoreau, 1837-1861*, John Cage's *Writing Through Finnegans Wake* (1978), and Ferdinand C. Lane's 1949 book, *Earth's Grandest Rivers*. Seeing the work through the lens of hauntology, invites potential, ambiguity, and indeterminacy into the experience. The contemporary interest surrounding ghosts, phantoms, haunting, and spectrality in general, rests in its ability to address the non-linearity of history, to challenge the order imposed by chronology (much like the disparate literary sources and time periods Knowles draws from), and to meditate on our own spectral presence on this precious planet. *Bread and Water* is equal parts printmaking, assemblage, bookmaking, baking, concrete poetry, and performance. Much

like the process of breadmaking itself, *Bread and Water* is a transformative work, providing the viewer and reader with primary experience to be felt by all our senses.

The Phantom Earth Imagined

The term “phantasm,” which refers to an image that wavers between the material and immaterial, was used by premodern philosophy and science to explain the workings of sight and consciousness.⁸⁴ The term also resonates with the process of photography as a recording of light and space is a phantom in its own right. In a blurring of new media and esoteric practice, American Spiritualists in the nineteenth century used the concept of the phantasm along with the new devices of telegraphy and photography to aid their communication with the spirit world. The convergence of ancient knowledge and modern technology generated a visual representation of a phantom or ghost; the union of the two put the “nature of the human senses, vision especially, in crisis.”⁸⁵ Early recordings of ghostly sightings recall a confusion of the senses, with the body at odds with what they are experiencing, perception becomes untenable. Think of Hamlet or various other ghost stories where a presence is felt or even visible to one person but not another, or in environmental terms with the uncanny or unbelievable experience of global warming. The ghost is itself a paradox of vision, “a virtual image, a visual experience that somehow differs from common perception and whose means of representation seek to convey [an] ontological waver.”⁸⁶ This relates to the very nature of vision itself, a phantom-like sense. The images of the bottoms of bread Xeroxed by Knowles which created the impetus for the series are uncanny in their own right. They are ambiguous images which reflect one’s imagination; is it the moon, is it the earth, is it a series of rivers, or just a loaf of bread (figure 22)?

The history of vision itself is located within the word phantasmata which comes from the word phantasia meaning imagination, which was developed from the root phaos meaning light, as

⁸⁴ Tom Gunning, “To Scan a Ghost: The Ontology of Mediated Vision,” *Grey Room*, no. 26 (2007): 97.

⁸⁵ Gunning, 102.

⁸⁶ Gunning, 104.

it was not possible to see without light. “According to Aristotle, both perception and thinking reply on phantasia, or imagination.”⁸⁷ The premodern conception of vision separated the sense into a hierarchy, vision was threefold: there was intellectual vision or reason, physical vision of the body, and spiritual vision of the soul, all informed by the imagination. Modern optics later explained vision as a relationship between light and lenses, or a media that carried and shaped light which could take the form of a glass of water or the human eye. The photograph renders visible what the optical revolution of the nineteenth century expelled: the importance and influence of the imagination to sight. The virtual image develops into the modern ghost and what becomes more mysterious than a transparent phantom is the process of photography itself.

Knowles’ phantom Xeroxed images of bread recall the cover photograph of the first Whole Earth Catalog (1968), taken from the 1967 ATS satellite who shot a time-lapse film of the earth rotating in space, shot from 23,000 miles above South America (figure 23).⁸⁸ The image is an alien or ghostly reproduction, totally unbound by the confines of earth. Stewart Brand, the founder of the catalog, used the image for its power to inspire care for the earth, to convey the preciousness of our resources and precariousness of our place in the universe. Knowles’ images of the bottom of her baked bread, Xeroxed for the *Bread and Water* series harken to an image of the earth floating in space, not unlike Brand’s description of the earth being “this little blue, white, green and brown jewel-like icon amongst a quite featureless black vacuum.”⁸⁹ The imagined image of what the earth might look like in the solar system was finally rendered clear through satellite photography and for Knowles’ the aerial perspective of bread and their imagined rivers recall that very experience.

⁸⁷ Gunning, 104.

⁸⁸ Stewart Brand, *Whole Earth Catalog*, 1st ed., 1968.

⁸⁹ “Hohllwelt - Interactive Environments - Context/Examples - Stewart Brand,” accessed February 23, 2019, <http://www.hohllwelt.com/en/interact/context/sbrand/site2575.html>.

Bread and Water

The prints made from the Xeroxes are cyanotype and palladium prints, both printmaking processes are akin to that of breadmaking. The cyanotype, also called sun printing, processes light from a UV source, such as the sun, which produces a cyan-blue print image on cloth or paper, a low-cost process also referred to as blueprints. Palladium itself is a rare white metal whose salts are photosensitive. The salts are measured in grams, the preferred measurement for bread-makers, and are mixed with water, and painted onto sheets of paper. After the paper dries in the dark, which parallels the many stages of shrouded rest of the starter and dough, the paper or cloth is exposed on a light table to contact negatives made from the Xeroxed bread loaves. After exposure, the paper is submerged in a tray of water where the developing process occurs, similar in concept to the proving process of breadmaking. After they are dried, (or baked if we substitute the print for bread) the unique prints are ready for further manipulation in the form of added drawing and projected text.

Knowles has referred to the cyanotype process as an event or performance. One can clearly see the connection to temporality with the light source being the sun itself. The changes of the light of the sun make their imprint on the final print which Knowles also subjects to frequent washing causing the image to decay in time with each successive pass through water.⁹⁰ Further explaining the process, Knowles reflects:

Then I add a final layer. This process pulls the image from the inside of the cloth and out into human frontal space. I'm building something from the inside out. This means that there's human space in it, and that the person standing in front of the panel is part of it. I consciously allow this space. It's a fugitive process, meaning it could never be the same twice. It makes permanent the moment in which you catch it. Once dry and pressed with the iron, it is both fixed and permanent. Each cloth I make is a performance.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Knowles and Saarbrücken, *Indigo island*, 110. The works Knowles is speaking of specifically were exhibited in a solo show titled, *Indigo Island* at Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, Saarbrücken, Germany in 1994.

⁹¹ Knowles and Saarbrücken, 110.

The entirety of the work, each stage of it and each iteration of it is a performance: the bread, the prints, the sound objects included in the exhibition, the radio performance (in which she reads excerpts from the book and uses found objects as sound makers), and the book. The objects assembled on a long table in her exhibition at the Emily Harvey Foundation all invite direct participation. Much like her event scores, each object collected for the show are affixed with a small paper tag describing an action to be performed. A small dried squash that sits on the table is paired with a tag that reads: “Bread and Water/ Rest fingers inside the horns for a good feeling” (figure 24, 25).⁹² Another dried seed pod on the table directs the viewer to hold the object in their hand and “examine by scratching the patterned stem.”⁹³ Knowles asks the viewer to directly engage with each object by looking, touching, and sounding the articles which results in a performative sound work.

Bread, as American writer and activist Michael Pollan has described it, is an inspired substance, an “everyday proof of the possibility of transcendence.”⁹⁴ One day, after turning over a loaf of homemade bread made with the amateur baker, friend, and poet Bryan McHugh, Knowles noticed that the underside of the bread, with its cracks and crevasses, looked like a “tortoise shell split into oracle lines in a fire.”⁹⁵ With this revelation, she began Xeroxing the bottom of loaves and recording their shifting plates and cracks. Studying the loaves and the resulting Xeroxes a bit further, Knowles began to understand the cracks more as rivers. With this in mind, Knowles opened an atlas and found relationships and correspondences between great rivers of the world and the rivers in the bread.

⁹² archiviobonotto, *Alison Knowles. Interview “Bread and Water,”* accessed March 10, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=107&v=GZ3s3BAuTNg.

⁹³ archiviobonotto.

⁹⁴ Michael Pollan, *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation:* (Penguin Books, 2013), 250, <https://www.amazon.com/Cooked-Natural-Transformation-Michael-Pollan/dp/0143125338>.

⁹⁵ Knowles, “Alison Knowles, Bread and Water Documents.”

Belief as Knowing

Knowles' initial correlation of the cracks to oracle lines speak to her use of esoteric knowledge as a vehicle in the work. An oracle is an agent with divine or prophetic insight. The *I Ching* or *Book of Changes* is itself a type of oracle and was used by John Cage and taught to Knowles by Cage. However, rather than providing information about a future event, like a prophet, the book is intended to generate an assessment of the present moment. The production of one's reading illuminated subtle flows and currents in the universe, for Cage and Knowles the book was utilized as a method for deriving compositions and artworks infused with the power of universal knowledge. Knowles' continued use of the *I Ching* centers her practice within a terrestrial present, bound to the earth and to current lived time. Knowles' practice of looking to the *Book of Changes* to inform or guide a present work renegotiated the position of the artist as ultimate producer and instead looks to nature and time as the template for the creative act. George Brecht's contribution of the event score cannot be overestimated as a contribution to the decentering of the author, "the revisioning of the object and its relationship to process, but most significantly, to the establishment of the receiver as central in the production of consciousness."⁹⁶ Knowles consistent use of the event score as a generating principle for her work, as seen literally with her score *Make a Salad*, and more indirectly in *Bread and Water*, speak to the importance of the viewer as the center of the work and its experience.

Uniting the study of performance with folkloric or esoteric discourse "provides a theoretical and methodological framework within which to examine the practice of believing as a way of knowing that articulates the point of intersection of an individual, a group, a text, and an abstract concept."⁹⁷ Though visible in daily acts of life, the metaphor of haunting as a way to

⁹⁶ Kristine Stiles, "Tuna and Other Fishy Thoughts on Fluxus Events," in *Indigo island : art works* (Saarbrücken : Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, 1995), 33, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/43277791>.

⁹⁷ Marilyn Motz, "The Practice of Belief," *The Journal of American Folklore* 111, no. 441 (1998): 339, <https://doi.org/10.2307/541314>.

explore traditional belief systems has generally been displaced by academic discourse through the prevalence of science and reason. Esoteric knowledge and alternative ways of knowing are ambiguous and not subject to verification, the idea of belief and becoming or the process of believing as an epistemology occurs through phenomenological experience. Furthermore, Michel de Certeau's definition of belief, which he describes as an action, proposition, or modality, expands on the relationship between belief and becoming as a way of knowing (with an implicit link to Knowles' *Proposition #2, Make a Salad*). This definition too engages both Knowles' and Fluxus' commitment to performance and primary experience as a way of addressing social systems and generating knowledge.⁹⁸

The application of systems of power, such as law, science and technology, dominate and impose control over everyday life which effectively suppress traditional structures and belief practices.⁹⁹ It was through the process of "technologizing that occurred in the 19th century [that] isolated and privileged techniques to leave behind in daily life a 'folkloric' devalued knowledge in the form of cooking and similar practices."¹⁰⁰ In other words, technological processes effectively erase our connection to the act of making, and caring for ourselves, what is left behind and left unconsidered is the creation of perception, identity, and ritual through full-body engagement that contribute to our knowledge and belief systems.

Rather than classifying belief as opposed to knowledge, we can understand it as its own system of creating and generating knowledge and experience.¹⁰¹ "It is continually changing, local, culturally specific, concrete and personal. It exists in and through its performance. It's meaning is metaphoric and symbolic, malleable, and multivalent. It is aural and kinesic as well as visual."¹⁰²

Akin to the experience of discovering *Potage Sec, Bread and Water, or Make a Salad*, the

⁹⁸ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, Third edition (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2011), 178.

⁹⁹ Motz, "The Practice of Belief," 341.

¹⁰⁰ Motz, 342.

¹⁰¹ Motz, 342.

¹⁰² Motz, 348.

essence of folklore or belief is its uniqueness, its inability to be duplicated, envisaged or generalized—one's personal experience with and of the work is a singular process unable to be replicated by another person.

Belief is ambiguous, it resists discipline and definition, “its slips through cracks, blurs genres, exceeds its practical usefulness, eludes maps and diagrams, refuses to be counted and measured, and declines to specify its meaning.” In every way, belief counters empirical knowledge based on “principles of replicability, measurability and reliability.”¹⁰³ It is akin to indeterminate intermedia exercises which blur all definitions, of the artist as ultimate producer, of time, of medium, of eventual form, and subjective meaning. *Bread and Water* is a clear indeterminate expression of the transcendental banal, relying on the audience to complete the work through direct engagement through all the senses.

Timothy C. Lloyd defines folklore as “the intersection of artfulness and everyday life.”¹⁰⁴ He uses the term “artfulness” as a way to divert the preciousness typically attributed to art; artfulness is not “high” art but of the most banal materials and circumstances. Artfulness is explored in the making of everyday things, not only craft objects like quilts, clothing, or pottery, but in the process of playing games, storytelling, or cooking. Using artfulness instead of the term art directs attention to the process of creation rather than solely focusing on the end result of the artwork.¹⁰⁵ The link to the supernatural is the pattern that these everyday creations generate; they become ritual-like if not wholly ritual processes: telling a bedtime story or cooking a particular dish for a specific occasion. The supernatural is the “realm of the fundamental patterns and rhythms of time, space, growth and decline [...] which give purpose and governance to life.” Understood this way, the spiritual or esoteric is not a separate state but rather is connected to

¹⁰³ Motz, 348.

¹⁰⁴ Timothy C. Lloyd, “Folklore, Foodways, and the Supernatural,” in *Out Of The Ordinary*, Folklore and the Supernatural (University Press of Colorado, 1995), 59, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt46nwn8.8>.

¹⁰⁵ Lloyd, 59.

life.¹⁰⁶ By recuperating such concepts of belief and folklore, which had been ostracized by rationalism, one can grasp such systems as a performative language, a tool for communication and becoming. Belief used in this way becomes an action; we are more interested in how the experience takes place and is registered in the body than on the specific belief itself. In this way, one can grasp the transformational qualities inherent in Knowles' work, like *Bread and Water*, *Potage Sec*, and *Make a Salad*. Through sight, sound, taste, scent, and movement, a subjective, emotional, and visceral response is activated in the body of the participant or performer; the variable performance connects our felt perceptions to an action, the trace of which remains imprinted in the body.

A Starter Recipe for Self-Transformation

Bread and Water traverses various media, space and time. If we begin at the beginning of the process, we must start with the starter, which came from the Santa Fe, New Mexico, home of Knowles' assistant at the time, Catherine Harris. A starter is a simple mixture of wheat flour, water, and a microbial leavening agent. After a period of fermentation, the starter is ready to be used as a leaving agent for bread, substituting for commercially grown yeast that one can buy in packets at the grocery store. The starter is a living thing, requiring regular feedings and attention—dedicated bread-makers care for their starters like children, bringing it with them on vacation or hiring a babysitter for times when they are away; they are cherished and protected microbial assets, patiently awaiting their eventual transformation into an edible substance. Speaking of the starter, Knowles has reflected on the nature of the process, of sharing starters and food with others as an elementary and transformative procedure, likening it to creating a house or a sacred space.

Making bread is a way for me to find a house. The enzyme starter is usually kept on the top shelf or in the cooler as it grows. The starter moves to other houses to find flours such

¹⁰⁶ Lloyd, 60.

as rye, wheat, spelt, and the usual white enriched. Starter multiplies from itself and is easily shared. Shared bread begins with shared starter.¹⁰⁷

The work itself promotes an ethics of sharing and a type of consumption that self-generates and therefore resists the disposability of the agricultural industrial complex and commodity culture. The correlations to different ways of existing and eating relate back to Knowles' *Make a Salad*, as the starter itself is its own form of an event score to be implemented and inflected by different environments, air cultures, and others.

The "house" created and found in *Bread and Water* is a composite building, drawing from words, objects and symbols the world over. The correlation to homes is also a literal one: people are advised to bake bread in their homes during the process of selling, as bread is the "ultimate olfactory synecdoche for homeliness." This is a confounding principle since most of us never bake bread anymore; however, as Pollan contends, the "sense memory and its association with a happy domesticity endure."¹⁰⁸ However, rather than the domestic setting relying on a physical structure the home one finds in *Bread and Water* is both a home in themselves and in the earth, connecting the processual and sensorial experience to their place within nature. The viewer is not an island unto herself but a species, like the starter, that is influenced by different environments, cultures, and others.

As the art critic and writer Henry Martin discussed in his introductory essay to Knowles' 1995 book, *Bread and Water*, "The house she discovers is the state of mind that accompanied her explorations and made them possible: its openness, intensity, patience, and confidence, which is confidence both in itself and in a necessary order of the world."¹⁰⁹ The process of making a starter, creating the sponge, making the dough, letting it rise, and eventually baking it, relates to

¹⁰⁷ Knowles, *Bread and Water*, xi.

¹⁰⁸ Pollan, *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation*, 209.

¹⁰⁹ Knowles, *Bread and Water*, xi.

Knowles' process of making the work—it is a testament to time and nature, an openness to our environment and to the world. *Bread and Water*, like bread-making, is a gestalt, or as Pollan refers to it, an “emergent system: something that is much more than, and qualitatively different from, the sum of its simple parts.”¹¹⁰ Bread is the end result of a series of complex processes that start with a fresh grain and end with the addition of a live starter that literally breathes life and air into the flour causing the dough to ferment, rise, and provide complete nutrition. “Ordinary cooking may have been discovered by accident, whereas bread required a much more powerful leap of creative imagination.”¹¹¹ It is that imagination or resourcefulness that Knowles continues to return to in her work by looking at the materials that surround her daily life and transforming them into an experience that renews one's connection to their own humanity and place in the world.

Seventeen prints in total make up the book form of *Bread and Water*, which serves as their most lasting representation. The bread rivers are from around the world and each print is titled accordingly, including *The Amazon at Belem*, *The Hudson at Jersey City*, *Arnhem Land at Deaf Adder Creek (Australia)*, *Mud Flats Where the Nile Meets the Nibia*, *Mouths of the Ganges at Calcutta*, *L'Isère où elle rejoint le Rhône*, *Great Lakes at Great Bear*, *The Dnieper at the Black Sea*, *Lake Como at Bellagio*, *Yangtze from Lake Dongting to the Yellow Sea*, *River Stour from Pegwell to Canterbury*, *Belfast at the Irish Sea*, *Overview of Shikoku*, *The Volga at the Caspian Sea*, *Santa Clara River at Oxnard (Los Angeles)*, *Sjælland at Roskilde*, and *The Elbe at Hamburg*. Each print, with accompanying text printed onto the surface of the paper with various related thoughts, facts, and drawings about that particular loaf/river, is partnered in the book with an abstract concrete poem that in itself is a collage of various text sources. While the poems cannot be strictly classified as concrete poetry, which necessitates that the meaning is conveyed through visual means using patterns and other typographic devices, Knowles' literary collages

¹¹⁰ Pollan, *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation*., 210.

¹¹¹ Knowles, *Bread and Water*.

communicate the meandering of rivers, with the text flowing down and across the page like an unruly current.

Like her other pieces, *Bread and Water* demands that the work be completed by the viewer. We are not provided with linear facts and figures about each river; we are given a dream-like weaving of text and image whereby the audience is required to make sense of the experience. With concrete poetry the nature of the response is radically different; it is at once incomplete and multisensory, asking the reader/viewer to complete and add to the work. “Concrete poetry often triggers associations which are subjective, apperceptive, autonomous and autobiographical. The reader is forced to become actively involved in the creation of the total poem; to complete the poem in a way the author normally does.”¹¹² *Bread and Water* unites concrete poetry with traditional poetry, as it is not solely composed by visual means, but does ask the reader to create their own associations between form, image, and language. There is potential in the structure; it is not a linear text but instead invites a non-linear strategy of reading and looking.

Eco-Dietetics in *Bread and Water*

Like Dada, Fluxus performs a rebellion against convention with its stated proclamation of being anti-art. “In terms of American culture, however, this protest had its roots in the philosophical tradition of Emerson and Thoreau, who combined a rigorous non-conformism with a strong sense of responsibility for nature and society.”¹¹³ The overt relationship of Knowles’ works to environmentalism has increased over the years. The commitment to the earth that *Bread and Water* exhibits, with its focus on the globe, rivers, and resources, as a precious commodity, is at once ambiguous and clearly visible. “*Bread and Water* shows how the ambiguity of images can

¹¹² Roy F Allen, “F L U X U S and Literature,” *Visible Language Journal* 26, no. 1–2 (n.d.): 74.

¹¹³ Bernd Schulz, “Art as Life and Life As Art: The Works of Alison Knowles and the Fluxus Movement,” in *Indigo island : art works* (Saarbrücken : Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, 1995), 55, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/43277791>.

help viewers encounter themselves and can thus give rise to responsible action.”¹¹⁴ The physical process that generates the phantom-like Xeroxed and printed images one encounters speaks to our own temporal experience. The urgency of action is communicated through the senses and has the potential to propels one’s awareness directly into the present moment and forward in action. The ghostly image becomes a memento mori, reminding us of our own as well as the earth’s mortality. *Bread and Water* and other work by Knowles, contain a “sensibility for everyday ritual forms the basis for what we could call the shamanistic presence of her art work...”¹¹⁵ The invention of bread is said to have derived from ancient Egypt where a pot of wheat porridge left in a corner for a period of time began to bubble and ferment. The Egyptians took that bowl of aerated wheat and baked it. The result was truly supernatural, what was at first a wet and dense substance had transformed into a light risen loaf. *Bread and Water* connects one to their own life through the process of nourishment that links back to Neolithic antiquity. The stream of human imagination and ingenuity that allowed for the flourishing of life is alive and present in *Bread and Water*.

Knowles’ work and its culinary commitment calls one’s attention to major systems in need of dismantling. Equally present in *Bread and Water*, *Potage Sec* and *Make a Salad*, Knowles points to the agricultural industrial complex and encourages a reconsideration of how and what we eat. Rethinking our systems of belief surrounding food is a social, political, economic, and moral imperative, especially relevant in light of the existential threat of climate change. There is an avid critique of an organic and plant-based lifestyle, based on socio-economic availability, food deserts, and the inability of poor communities to access and purchase organic or locally sourced products. However, the politics of diet, and specifically the discourse of eco-

¹¹⁴ Schulz, 59.

¹¹⁵ Schulz, 59.

dietetics has long been misunderstood and misclassified as neoliberal.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, the lack of access to fresh and local food, is a direct result of federal policies that enable the domination and control of industrial agriculture and monoculture. If instead the subsidies and efforts were directed toward sustainable agricultural production and support for those farms and farmers fresh, local, and organic food could be made available to many more people.¹¹⁷ The direct experience felt by the audience of *Make a Salad* and through *Bread and Water's* haunted images of bread and text passages of polluted rivers and fish clearly point to the importance of environmentalism and the wide availability of fresh and healthy food for the enjoyment of all people.

Food-based protest and activism has been a part of American consciousness since William Sylvester Graham and his health food movement of the 1830s.¹¹⁸ The new organic and slow food movement that began to gain steam in the mid-twentieth century and fully took hold of a growing body of people in the 1960s and 70s has long been a part of American culture. Distinct from the humoral and nutritionist traditions, eco-dietetics, which is defined as the knowledge of the ecological effects of eating, has two distinct variations, agrarian and corporate.¹¹⁹ The agrarian variant, seen in *Make a Salad*, which prioritizes food that is pleasurable rather than profitable, and grown rather than purchased, is markedly different to its corporate counterpart which bolsters neoliberal practices (think Bezos owned Whole Foods).¹²⁰ The agrarian based eco-dietetics realizes a new epistemology of diet: what's good for you is also good for the planet.

As seen in her later work like *Bread and Water*, what was, in its first performance at the ICA in 1962, a subtle, spontaneous, and prescient, expression of eco-dietetics, the contemporary

¹¹⁶ Tripp Rebrovick, "The Politics of Diet: 'Eco-Dietetics,' Neoliberalism, and the History of Dietetic Discourses," *Political Research Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (2015): 678.

¹¹⁷ Rebrovick, 686.

¹¹⁸ Jeffrey Haydu, "Cultural Modeling in Two Eras of U.S. Food Protest: Grahamites (1830s) and Organic Advocates (1960s–70s)," *Social Problems* 58, no. 3 (2011): 461, <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2011.58.3.461>. By comparing the health food movement advanced by the Grahamites of the 1830s and the organic movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Haydu analyzes the underlying grievances and advocacy of natural food alternatives in United States history.

¹¹⁹ Rebrovick, "The Politics of Diet," 678.

¹²⁰ Rebrovick, 678.

performances of *Make a Salad* are now undoubtedly participating in the politics of environmentalism and highlighting the relationship between food, the earth, and ourselves. In Knowles' most recent performance of *Make a Salad* at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, a soundtrack of an android-woman speaking of the introduction of the holiday Earth Day was heard while the performers took their spot on the stage floor. The voice informed the audience about which countries around the world celebrate Earth Day, and how it was instituted in the 1970s, marking the birth of the environmental movement.

The ontological implications and system of belief of eco-dietetics maintain that you are *how* you eat rather than *what* you eat. "Eaters incorporate the values and methods that governed the cultivation of the particular food. If one eats local and organic [...] than one *becomes* local and organic..." If we extend this argument to Knowles performance in 2014 of *Make a Salad* at MoMA PS1 in Queens, New York, the agrarian impulse of the work is laid bare. Invited by Julia Sherman, founder of the publishing project, "Salad for President," Knowles made a salad from the vegetables available from the edible Salad Garden Project on the roof of the museum. In collaboration with garden designer, Camilla Hammer, Sherman transformed the rooftop of MoMA PS1 into an accessible green space for museum visitors and staff, which also served as a backdrop for interviews and conversations with various contemporary artists-cum-salad-chefs. With a clear relationship to the eco-dietetic version of incorporation, apart from eating local food the day it was harvested, the audience actually *became* the artwork itself, bringing home with them the experience of making a salad and a piece of the museum.

There is an implicit temporal element involved in eco-dietetics that is amplified in Knowles' scores. When one partakes in an agrarian eco-dietetic lifestyle, one is eating as close to the source as possible and participating in the growing, harvesting, and preparation of food.¹²¹ One is not relying on unseasonable food to be flown in from another country and climate, and

¹²¹ Rebrovick, 685.

then shipped across the country to their local supermarket, they are eating what is seasonably (and therefore temporally) available and locally sourced from their own backyard, community plot, or farmer's market. In *Bread and Water*, the performative act of sharing a starter with friends, that grows and changes as it is moved and used in various locations, speak to the physical proximity one's food can have to their life.

While most contemporary eaters experience eating as “a discrete act of consumption, such an experience is only possible in a world of industrial agriculture in which food almost magically appears ready-to-eat with its origin obscured.”¹²² Knowles' work radically alters the relationship to unthinking consumption by drawing our attention to the origin and production of the work which intern enables our own transformation through incorporation. This also counters recent misguided interpretations of Fluxus that classify its activities as an exploitation of capitalist models. If one understands the implications of agrarian based eco-dietetics, the “active attention to the provenance of food, surpasses the boundaries of mere consumption from the very beginning”¹²³ disqualifying neoliberal readings of the Fluxus project. Therefore, eating local and organic produces a connection to the earth and to our bodies, enabling a new way of being in the world. Food is no longer solely about caloric value and restriction but about pleasure and temporal connectivity to oneself and to the earth.

Knowles' work is a commitment to life. Her dedication to the temporal processes of art and life and where the two intersect generate action. Through the experience of *Bread and Water* a multi-layered engagement with the earth and our connection to it is explored and valued. The work is not about exploiting our resources, or the creation of new material but about rediscovering how rituals that made us human contribute to our own systems of belief and becoming. *Bread and Water* centers our sensations and care in our experience of our bodies and

¹²² Rebrovick, 685.

¹²³ Rebrovick, 685.

the earth in an effort to grasp the preciousness of our own experience and that which surrounds us.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

It's nice when people can relax and be attentive, watchful, empty; not so much eager but more a stance of waiting and noticing. I think that many of the pieces are just simple refreshment pieces done for whatever days work you have to do, supporting occurrences in life. It gives members of the audience the ball; they can make their own salad differently, even if they are doing it for their family.

- Alison Knowles, *Fluxus: A Conceptual Country*¹²⁴

Fluxus is experiencing a resurgence, with major museum archives supporting various exhibitions and programs across the world. From 2018-2019, in partnership with the Getty Research Institute, the LA Philharmonic produced a yearlong program that explored Fluxus events and performances, including a performance of Knowles' 1962 score *Make a Salad*, which she performed at age 85 at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles. Currently in preparation, is a forthcoming retrospective exhibition of Knowles' work set to travel to national venues. There is a forthcoming monograph of Knowles titled, *Performing Chance: The Art of Alison Knowles In/Out of Fluxus* written by scholar Nicole Woods which focuses on Knowles' work from the 1950s - 1970s. The monograph, which is the first such publication on Knowles, was supported by a grant from the Graham Foundation and is set to be published in the near future. There is much evidence to suggest that her work is being embraced now more than ever, with many discovering her work for the first time.

¹²⁴ "Fluxus: A Conceptual Country [Visible Language, Volume 26 Nos. 1/2, Winter/Spring 1992]: Providence. Rhode Island School of Design. Curated and Edited by Estera Milman; Essays by Various a: Amazon.Com: Books," 103, accessed March 11, 2019, <https://www.amazon.com/Fluxus-Conceptual-Country-Visible-Language/dp/B000WP07P6>.

A major consideration of this paper was to study to a period of Knowles' work that has consistently been overlooked but which has major implications for her career as a whole. The focus on such work helps one to understand the impact of her contributions not just within Fluxus but independently. By analyzing *Potage Sec* which is absent from the discourse, and *Bread and Water* which has scant scholarship, this study calls attention to a critical period in Knowles' career that further explicates and enlivens her radical process. Moreover, using feminist phenomenology and hauntology as methodologies to understand the feminist and environmental implications of her work distinguishes her practice from solely residing within Fluxus and provides more accessibility to her project by situating it within a framework that is receiving increased institutional, academic, and public support.

In this thesis I have shown how three of Knowles' works, *Proposition #2, Make a Salad* (1962), *Potage Sec* (1989), and *Bread and Water* (1992-1995), perform choice, meaning, and subjectivity into being through holistic and temporally based corporeal experience. The quotidian, and specifically culinary processes are a source and focus of that experience, which opens one's life to the generative and transformative potential of everyday ritual. The commitment to chance and indeterminacy, the de-centering of the artist/ author, and the use of the everyday expand the work into the future and into transcendence. Knowles' practice is a transcendent gestalt with simple means transforming into an experience greater than its initial components. Various Fluxus scholars have championed one aspect of Fluxus production over another; as I have argued, the performative basis of Knowles' work is the most critical, in how it both generates the creation of other artworks but more radically, how it allows for a positioning of one's own body at the center of all action and experience.

After breathing, food is our first visceral connection with our own nature and with the world at large. Nourishment and the need for it plunges us into our humanity and centers our experience temporally on the earth. Knowles' insight into this human act of necessity, desire, and

consumption feeds into our own belief systems and systems of becoming which enable us to become more fully human. Each artwork discussed is an exercise in being and becoming which connects both the artist and the viewer to their own life through an experience of the transcendental banal. By looking to the ordinary objects and rituals that populate and structure daily life the experience of transcendence is not derived from a deific entity but rather one's own concrete life. The process of making food, or the objects one collects and holds on to, have the potential to generate meaning and transform one's connection to their own body and larger humanity.

This project has explored the way Knowles challenges dominant systems which include museum exhibition and archival practices, the politics of diet, and woman's subjugated position through her artworks by activating the body with lived experience. By galvanizing the use of indeterminacy, de-authoring of the work, and the medium of everyday experience, Knowles provides a situation for freedom in the body of the viewer by which meaning is made. To experience Knowles' work is to engage in a process of unlearning unnatural conditions through direction engagement and the necessary task the work requires of the viewer to complete it. As analyzed throughout the paper, Knowles continues to challenge the way that systems of power, which include gender, art systems, and systems of belief are absorbed, inscribed, and performed by the body. Her refusal to engage in these oppressive systems presents us with a terrestrial and spiritual map with which to explore and discover our own humanity. Blurring the boundaries of art and life help to clarify both as extensions of one another, that serve to strengthen each experience directly in our body.

Similar to the existential crisis of climate change, which for many is impossible to grasp intellectually, Beauvoir realized that one of the most difficult challenges to the feminist movement was how to encourage women to see themselves and their situation with a fresh perspective. The deconditioning of imposed femininity, Beauvoir posited, could be assisted by

women engaging directly with other women, hearing each other's stories, and recognizing their shared humanity. Knowles' work speaks to this process of gender deconditioning and the full realization of environmentalism by activating one's body in personal and collective experience that has the potential to alter one's behavior and way of thinking. By doing so, Knowles' feminism pushes humanity forward, towards transformation and transcendence by changing the life of the person who experiences and engages with the work but by also changing the generation of women and men who will come after her. Knowles' work leaves one with hope that both our conceptions of ourselves and our place on this earth can be renewed and redirected towards the transcendental banal experiences of life itself.

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FIGURES



Figure 1; 2

Alison Knowles, *Proposition #2, Make a Salad*, 1962

Flux-Olympiad, 2008

Presented as part of UBS Openings: The Long Weekend – States of Flux, Tate Modern, 24–26
May 2008

Photo © Tate



Figure 3
Alison Knowles, *Proposition #2, Make a Salad*, 1962
Concert in conjunction with the Festival of Misfits, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London,
October 24, 1962
The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Object number 3724.2008.U05; Box B 13 94_17_185



Figure 4
Alison Knowles, *Proposition #2, Make a Salad*, 1962
Concert in conjunction with the Festival of Misfits, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London,
October 24, 1962
The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Object number 3724.2008.U05; Box B 13 94_17_185



Figure 5
Hans Namuth, *Jackson Pollock*, 1950
Hans Namuth/Courtesy of Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona
© 1991 Hans Namuth Estate



Figure 6
Alison Knowles, *Potage Sec*, 1989
mixed media assemblage in glass casserole
3.75 x 5.75 inches
Inventory #210
Emily Harvey Foundation Archive/ Collection, Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, NY.



Figure 7
 Alison Knowles, *Potage Sec* (detail), 1989
 mixed media assemblage in glass casserole
 3.75 x 5.75 inches
 Inventory #210
 Emily Harvey Foundation Archive/ Collection, Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, NY.

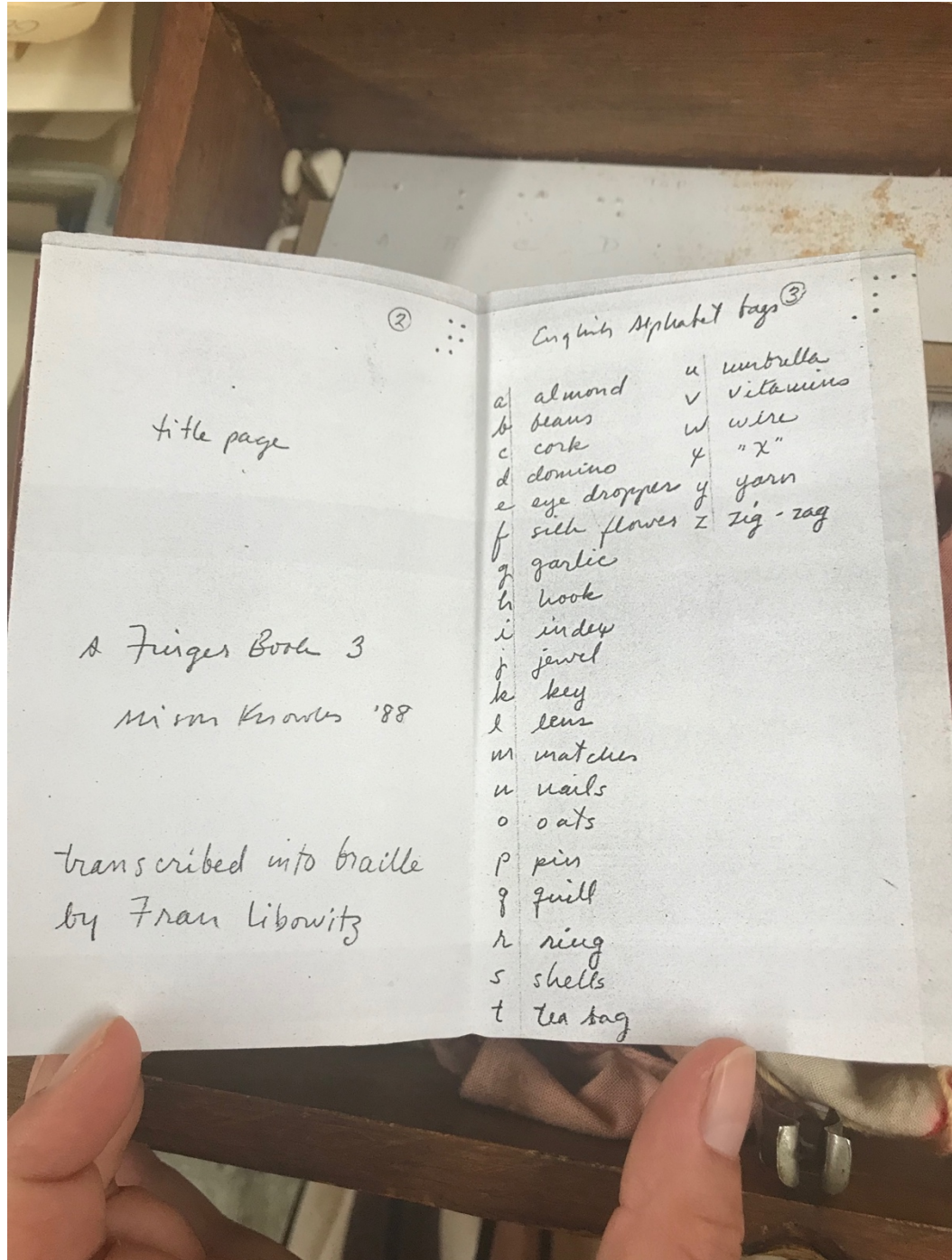


Figure 8
 Alison Knowles, *A Finger Book 3* (detail), 1988
 Paper and wood
 3.5 x 5.75 inches
 Inventory #222
 Emily Harvey Foundation Archive/ Collection, Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, NY.



Figure 9
Alison Knowles, *A Finger Book 3, English Alphabet Bags* (detail), 1988
Paper and wood
3.5 x 5.75 inches
Inventory #222
Emily Harvey Foundation Archive/ Collection, Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, NY.

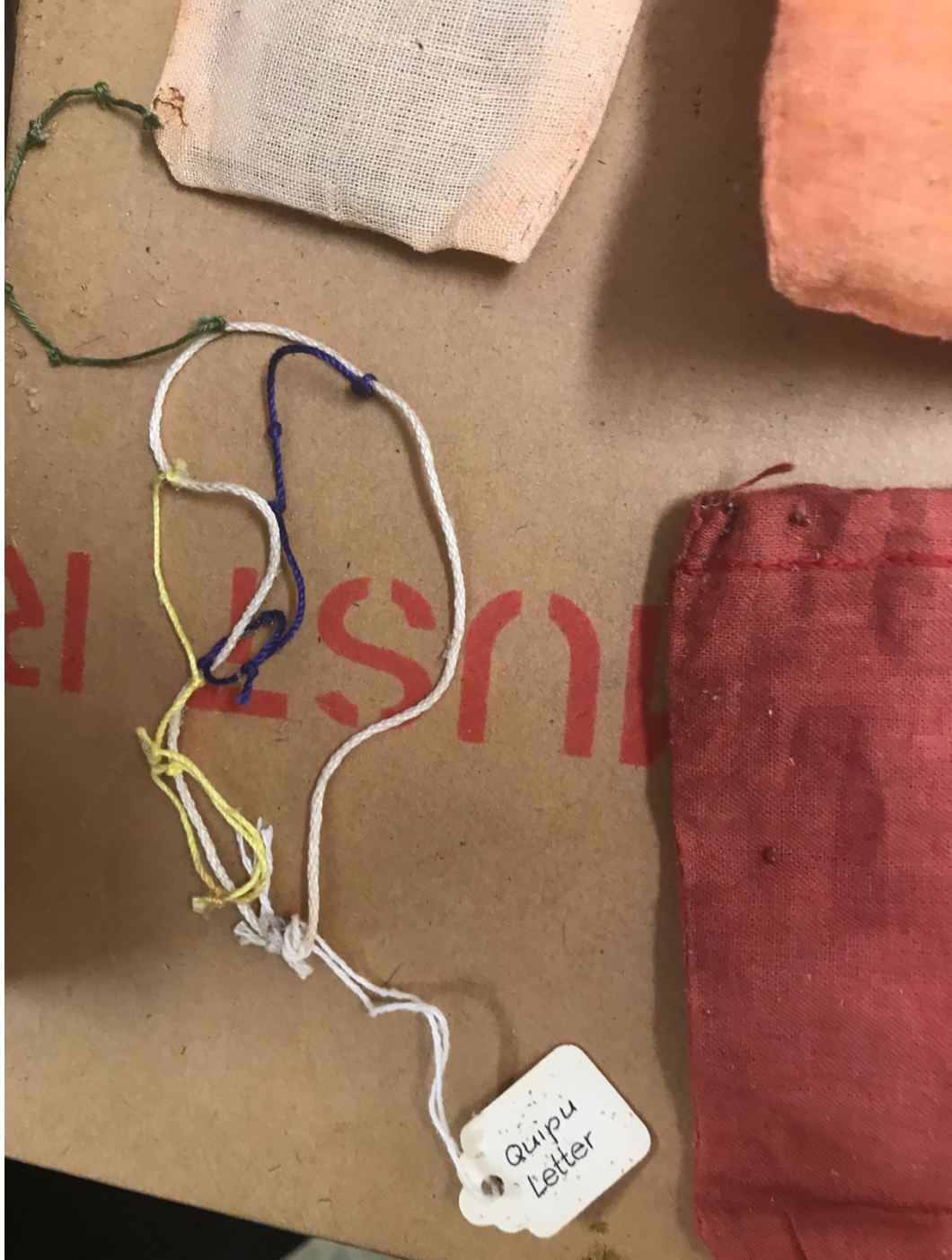


Figure 10
Alison Knowles, *Potage Sec* (detail), 1989
mixed media assemblage in glass casserole
3.75 x 5.75 inches
Inventory #210
Emily Harvey Foundation Archive/ Collection, Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, NY.



Figure 11
Alison Knowles, *Time Samples, Azuki Bean Turner*, 2006
Dimensions variable
Emily Harvey Foundation Archive/ Collection, Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, NY.



Figure 12
Alison Knowles, *Potage Sec* (detail), 1989
mixed media assemblage in glass casserole
3.75 x 5.75 inches
Inventory #210
Emily Harvey Foundation Archive/ Collection, Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, NY.

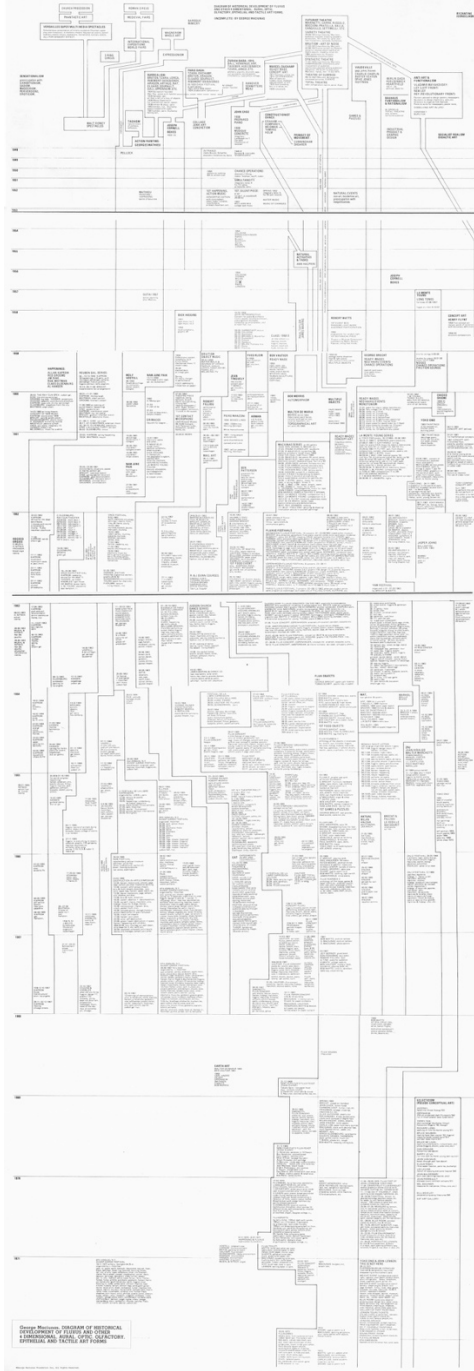


Figure 13
 George Maciunas
Diagram of Historical Development of Fluxus and Other 4 Dimensional, Aural, Optic, Olfactory, Epithelial and Tactile Art Forms (Incomplete), 1973
 Offset lithograph
 67 15/16 x 23 1/16 inches

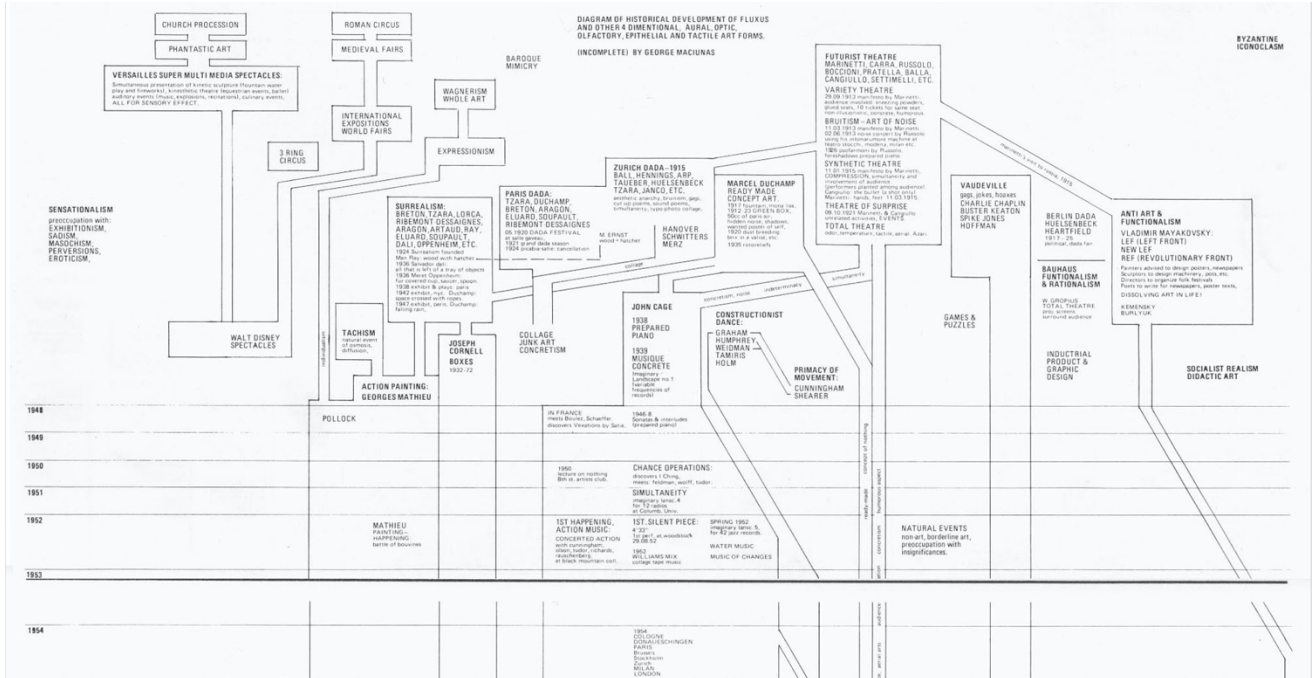


Figure 14
 George Maciunas
Diagram of Historical Development of Fluxus and Other 4 Dimensional, Aural, Optic, Olfactory, Epithelial and Tactile Art Forms (Incomplete) (detail), 1973
 Offset lithograph
 67 15/16 x 23 1/16 inches



Figure 15

Various Artists with Eric Andersen, Ay-O, George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Joe Jones, Alison Knowles, Takehisa Kosugi, George Maciunas, Nam June Paik, Benjamin Patterson, Mieko Shiomi, Ben Vautier, Robert Watts

Fluxkit, 1965

Vinyl-covered attache case, containing various media

Overall (closed): 13 3/8 x 17 1/2 x 4 15/16 inches

The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Object number 2182.2008.1-28



Figure 16

Alison Knowles, *Bean Rolls from Fluxkit*, 1965

Metal tin with offset label, containing nine beans and fourteen offset scrolls

Component (tin): 3 1/8 x 3 1/4 x 3 1/4" (8 x 8.3 x 8.2 cm); component (scrolls, rolled, each approx.): 9/16 x 2 3/4" (1.5 x 7 cm); component (bean, approx.): 3/8 x 1/4 x 1/8" (1 x 0.6 x 0.3 cm)

The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Object number 2182.2008.10



Figure 17

Tom Russotti and Larry Miller

Flux-Olympiad, 2008

Presented as part of UBS Openings: The Long Weekend – States of Flux, Tate Modern, 24–26
May 2008

Photo © Tate



Figure 18

Tom Russotti and Larry Miller

Flux-Olympiad, 2008

Presented as part of UBS Openings: The Long Weekend – States of Flux, Tate Modern, 24–26
May 2008

Photo © Tate



Figure 19
Tom Russotti and Larry Miller
Flux-Olympiad, 2008
Presented as part of UBS Openings: The Long Weekend – States of Flux, Tate Modern, 24–26
May 2008
Photo © Tate



Figure 20

Alison Knowles, *Bread and Water*, 1995

Pictured above: *Mud Flats After the Nile Floods the Nibia*, p. 70

Published by Left Hand Books, Barrytown

Dedicated to Ray Johnson

Introduction by Henry Martin

10 ¼ x 6 ¼ inches

ISBN 1 880516 07 1



Figure 21
Alison Knowles, *Bread and Water*, 1992
Exhibition at the Emily Harvey Foundation, New York
Fondazione Bonotto Archive, Molvena, Italy

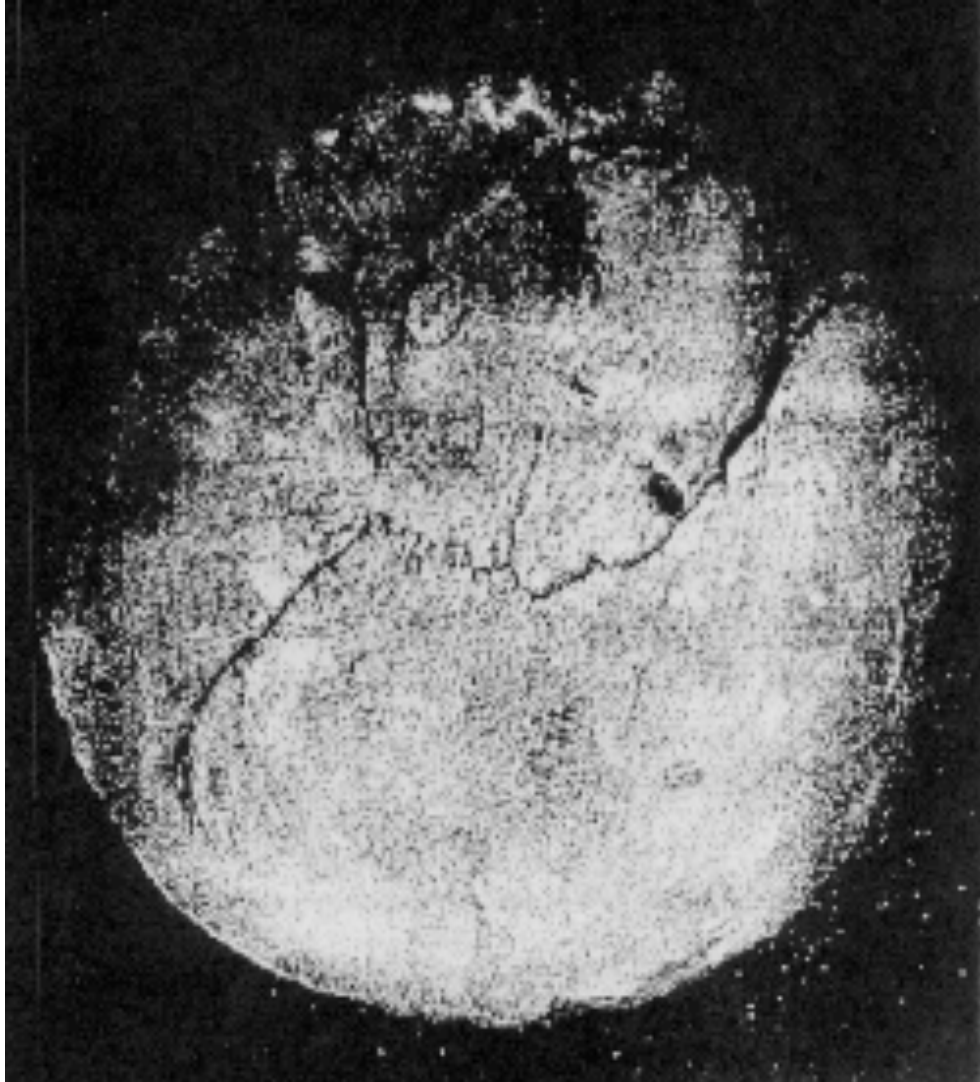


Figure 22
Alison Kowles, *Bread and Water, The Amazon at Belém*, 1992
Cyanotype print on cloth
3 x 5 inches

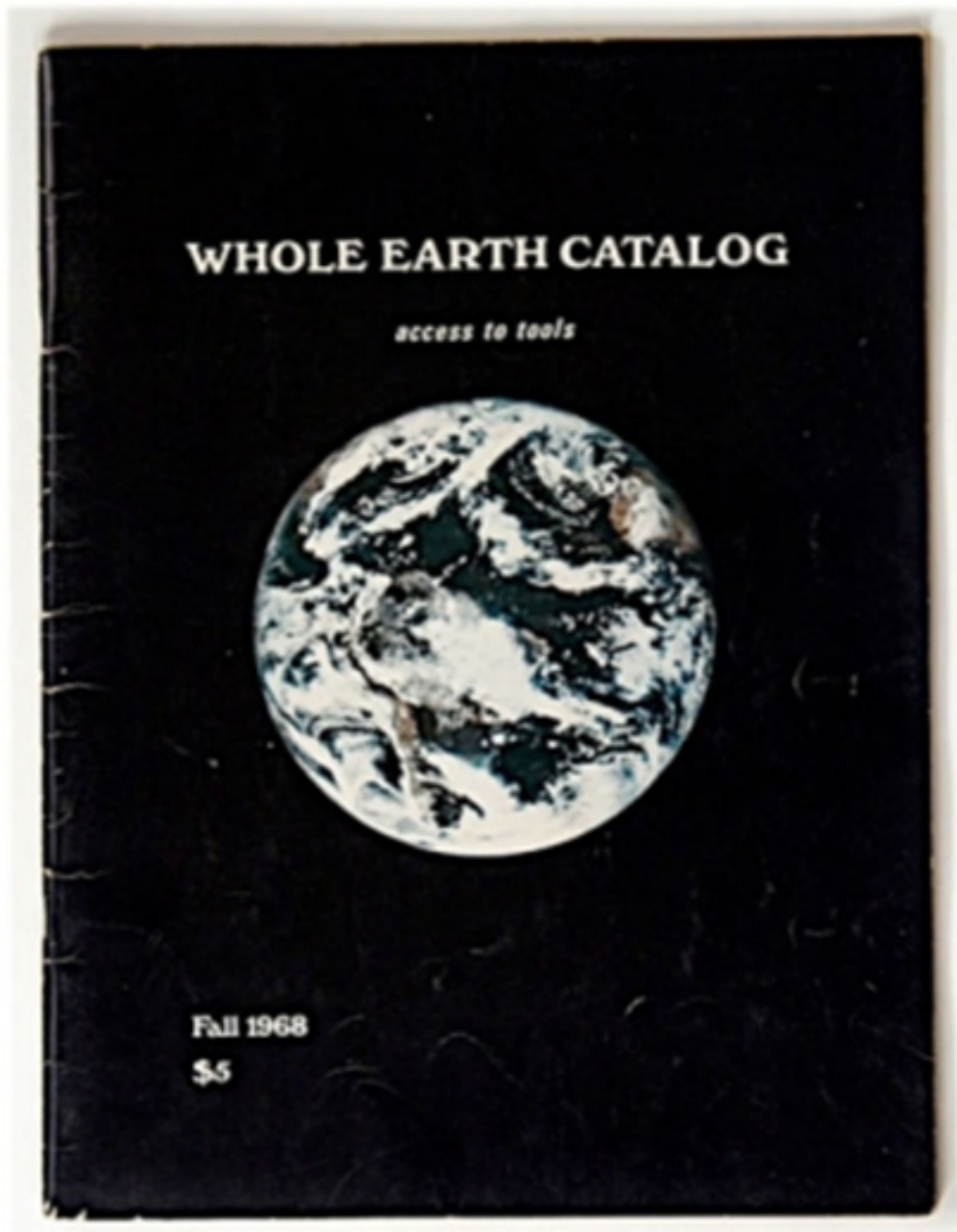


Figure 23
Stewart Brand, The Whole Earth Catalog, 1968



Figure 24

Alison Knowles, *Bread and Water*, 1992

Dried squash with printed tag

Text is "Bread and Water" and "Rest fingers inside the horns for a good feeling"

7 x 5 inches

Inventory #275

Emily Harvey Foundation Archive/ Collection, Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, NY.



Figure 25
Alison Knowles, *Bread and Water*, 1992
Dried "X"
9 x 5 inches
Inventory #276
Emily Harvey Foundation Archive/ Collection, Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, NY.

VITA

Cassidy Sunshine Petrazzi

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: ALISON KNOWLES: A FEMINIST RECIPE FOR SUBJECTIVITY OR
HOW TO COOK YOUR LIFE

Major Field: Art History

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in Art History at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2019.

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