

Museum of Modern Art blog INSIDE/OUT

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Case Study: Anna Ostoya Interprets *Fluxkit*

Posted by Allison Tepper, 12-Month Fluxus Intern, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books

There was a hint of prank and play in the air at The Museum of Modern Art on November 1. Had you been walking in the Museum's Marron Atrium that day, you may have gotten caught in a flurry of white cards descending from above. And elsewhere on the second floor—by a pedestal, bathroom sink, or windowsill—something may have appeared noticeably askew. Was that a marble rolling past the Cy Twomblys?

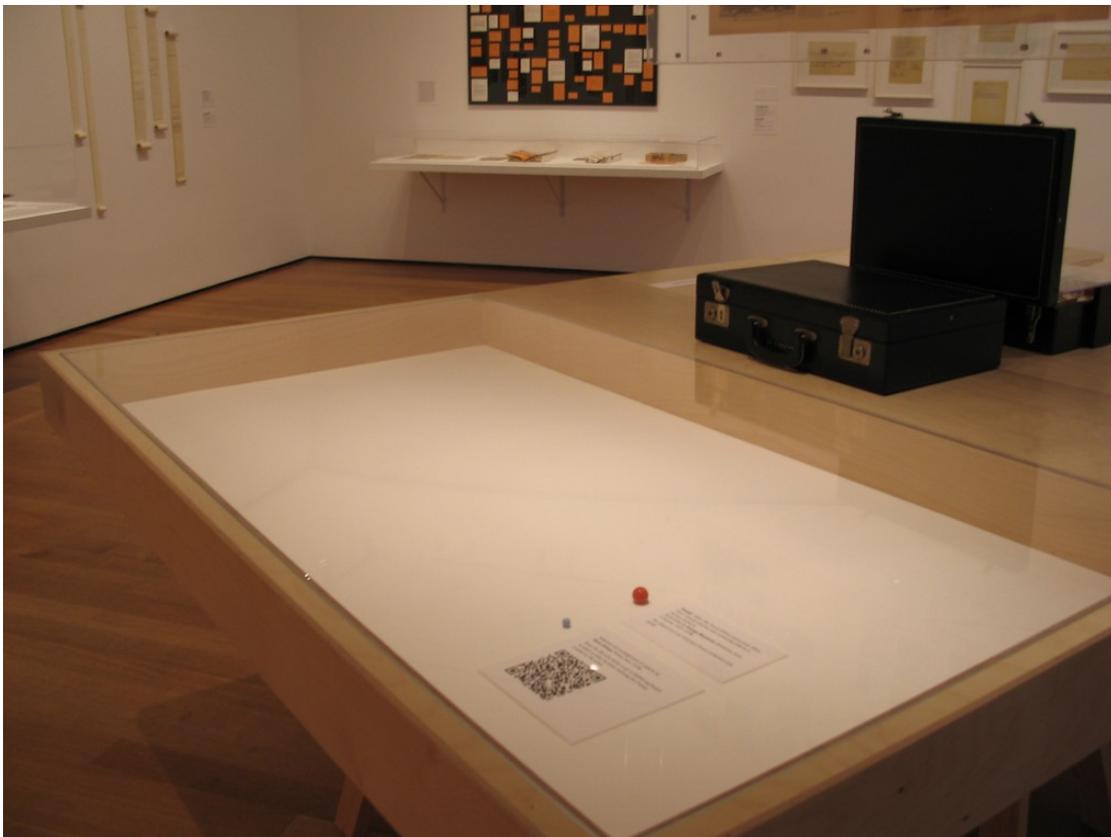


Fluxkit. 1965. Fluxus Edition announced 1964. The Museum of Modern Art. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift

The “culprit” behind this strange activity was Polish artist Anna Ostoya, the third of six artists (after Mieko Shiomi and Alison Knowles) to engage with a *Fluxkit*—a black suitcase containing a signature compilation of objects by many Fluxus artists—as part of the exhibition *Thing/Thought: Fluxus Editions, 1962–1978*. Ostoya has dedicated much of her artistic practice

to re-examining the politics and aesthetics of the historical avant-garde, and so she made a fine candidate to breathe new life into this work. Instead of unpacking the kit to create an arrangement in the display case provided in the gallery, Ostoya literally let loose its contents to explore the material within the broader space of the Museum. In the spirit of Fluxus, a movement celebrated for its humor as well as its evasion of the elite—and with a nod to the recent activity surrounding Zuccotti Park—the *Fluxkit* left the gallery.

Ostoya's performative approach to the kit was ambitious given that she had only a single day to work, and that her medium was objects in need of great care and supervision. The artist's placement and movement of the objects around the Museum had to accommodate not only the clock but also factors such as the preservation of works from collection. (To quell the concerns of any conservators reading this, the cards thrown from the Museum balcony were replicas of Mieko Shiomi's *Events and Games* that Ostoya prepared before her visit). Ostoya is, however, used to such procedural conditions, and welcomes their inevitable shaping of both the content and aesthetic of her work. In a recent series of collages from 2011, *Exposures*, Ostoya created one work per day for the month of February. Working under such a timetable, the artist's decisions were made largely spontaneously and efficiently, imbuing each work with the unique offerings of the day.



Anna Ostoya's arrangement of Fluxkit, in *Thing/Thought: Fluxus Editions, 1962–1978*

Touring the kit through the Museum was a similarly speedy enterprise, and the resultant video, with its quick frames and humble compositions, bears witness to the particular institutional context in which it was made. Though much of Ostoya's oeuvre has been guided by formal

decisions and a painterly aesthetic, in exploring the kit she was content to leave such motivations aside in favor of a more contemplative atmosphere. When the kit was returned to its home in the exhibition for museumgoers to see, Ostoya left a spare display: the kit closed, the display case empty save for a link to the video, and two marbles. While perhaps lacking in frills, the minimal arrangement was certainly not lacking in wit. With one latch left open, *Fluxkit* seems to wink—a subtle clue from the artist that we shouldn't take ourselves, or her work, too seriously.