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### **A General Description of the ATCA Project**

Serving as an interface among University of Iowa facilities—the [University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art](#), the [University Libraries](#), and a number of academic units—Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts (ATCA) is committed to the collection and preservation of works and papers of contemporary artists and to the facilitation and dissemination of research related to the post-World War II avant-garde. The project was founded by Estera Milman in 1982, and Milman acted as its director until her departure from the University in 2000.

Composed of a complex body of contemporary artifacts and documentation spanning such phenomena as Fluxus, event arts and happenings, book works and visual poetry, artists' video, correspondence art, conceptual art, performance relics, and artists' papers, the collection is similar in kind to holdings housed at the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and the Museum of Modern Art, among others.

In the late 1990s ATCA had a consortium collaboration (CIAO) with the Berkeley Art Museum, The University of California, The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, and the Walker Art Center to create networked intellectual access to educational and scholarly material on the broad theme of conceptual art, a project originally proposed during the 1988 conference Art Networks and Information Systems.

The conceptual thread that binds the ATCA collection together is that it represents what has been described as the [Marcel] Duchamp / [John] Cage legacy and provides eloquent evidence of recurrent artistic attempts to challenge the line of demarcation between art and life. The electronic organization and dissemination of these materials is particularly timely in view of the fact that they have subsequently been acknowledged as having served as the historical roots for much current post-Modern artistic production and scholarly discourse.

Artists and critics whose works and papers are represented in the ATCA collection include Vito Acconci, Eric Andersen, Laurie Anderson, Ay-O, Gregory Battcock, Joseph Beuys, George Brecht, John Cage, Giuseppe Chiari, Buster Cleveland, Jaime Davidovich, Douglas Davis, Jean Depuy, Robert Filliou, Albert Fine, Ken Friedman, Jorge Glusberg, Klaus Groh, Al Hansen, Bici (Forbes) Hendricks, Geoffrey Hendricks, Dick Higgins, Davi Det Hompson, Alice Hutchins, Ray Johnson, Allan Kaprow, Milan Knizak, Alison Knowles, Richard Kostelanetz, Shigeko Kubota, George Maciunas, David Mayor, Jonas Mekas, Tommy Mew, Robert Morris, Claes Oldenburg, Yoko Ono, Jack Ox, Nam June Paik, Benjamin Patterson, James Riddle, Dieter Rot, Carolee Schneeman, Greg Sharits, Meiko Shiomi, Daniel Spoerri, Klaus Staek, Andre Tomkins, Roland Topor, Endre Tot, Fred Truck, Ben Vautier, Wolf Vostell, and Robert Watts, among a host of others.

The significance of the ATCA collection can be illustrated by materials' public appearances. For example, a broad cross-section of these objects and publications formed the basis of a major traveling exhibition entitled Fluxus: A Conceptual Country, and selected works were regularly reproduced in such diverse publications as *The New York Times*, the *New York City Gallery Guide*, the *Milwaukee Journal*, *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*, *The Birmingham News*, *The Chicago Sun Times*, *The Northwestern Observer*, and the *Halifax News*, among others.

The exhibition opened as a cross-town festival in New York City, at Franklin Furnace Archive, Emily Harvey Gallery, and the Anthology Film Archives, and travelled to the Madison Art Center in Wisconsin, the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art and Iowa's Institute for Cinema and Culture, the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts in Alabama, Northwestern University's Mary and Leigh Block Gallery in Evanston, Illinois, and the Dalhousie Art Gallery in Halifax, Nova Scotia, initiating an active dialogue in the press at each site. Some years earlier, portions of the ATCA collection had been lent to the Taipei Fine Arts Museum in the Republic of China where they had been extremely well received by the Chinese Press and the museum public.

In addition, the collection's significance was confirmed by the National Endowment for the Arts when the Endowment awarded the UIMA funds to mount four new exhibitions drawn from the collection: [Ken Friedman: Fluxus Entrepreneur Extraordinaire](#); [The Artifacts of the Eternal Artists' Networks](#); [Alice Hutchins: Constructor of Arenas for Happenings](#), and [CAYC: Latin American Realities / International Solutions](#). A catalog these exhibitions is available online: [Subjugated Knowledge and the Balance of Power](#).

The Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts collection is composed of works and papers donated to the University of Iowa by contemporary artists and critics, institutes, and private collectors. Whenever possible, ATCA invites living artists to become directly involved in the organization and annotation of their materials. Members of the contemporary art community who elect to place their materials under the auspices of the Iowa repository have made clear that their decision to do so is based on ATCA's success as enabler through the program's ongoing initiation of exhibitions and facilitation of new scholarship in the field. Implicit in the materials around which the program revolves is a sense of cooperation among the arts and a non-hierarchical insistence upon the inter-relationship among the fine arts and other communication media.

Alongside broadly-based collections of avant-garde periodicals, installations, underground comics, Esperanto publications, visual poetry, correspondence and book works, collages, works on paper, multiples, performance scores, etc., donated by individual artists and collectors, the ATCA holdings also encompass a number of discrete special collections of which the following serve as example.

[ATCA Artists Works' and Correspondence Collection](#) (Msc 764)

This collection collocates a number of similar file sequences, including The Crane/Friedman Correspondence Art Collection. Michael Crane, Director of the University of Colorado Art Galleries in Boulder, Colorado, between 1978 and 1980 worked toward the preparation of the book, *Correspondence Art: A Source Book for the Network of International Postal Art Activity* (Michael Crane and Mary Stofflet, eds., San Francisco, Contemporary Arts Press, 1984). In 1980 Mary Stofflet joined the project. Their resulting publication is cited as the "first definitive reference on mail art around the world." The collection housed at Iowa is composed of the original works collected in preparation for this publication, only a small portion of which appeared as illustrations for the anthology.

Also included are portions of the Ken Friedman archive. The entire collection occupies some 85 feet; only 45 feet have been fully inventoried at this time.

[ATCA Periodicals and Zines Collection](#) (Msc 779)

This ATCA collection, spanning the period 1960-1980 and some 75 feet, brings together journals, newspapers, zines, and similar formal and informal periodicals that are art-related or have artistic merit. The range of subjects is broad and include political and cultural issues, gender and sexuality questions, as well as music, film, poetry, and religion.

[ATCA Rubber Stamp Art Collection](#) (MsC 788)

Miscellaneous printed materials (primarily catalogs) concerning rubber stamp art, circa 1985-1995. The majority of the materials in this collection were acquired by artist, author, and archivist John Held Jr. (born 1947) from William "Picasso" Gaglione (born 1943).

[ATCA Comics Collection](#) (MsC 780)

Artists' and underground comics, 1969-1979.

[The Artists' Television Network Records](#) (MsC 800)

In the 1960s, New York City's SoHo district had more video artists per square block than the rest of the country put together. In 1976 exhibition facilities like the Kitchen, Global Village, and Anthology Film Archives joined with a number of individuals to organize Cable SoHo in an attempt to place video art on Manhattan Cable Television. Later that year, the Artists' Television Network (ATN) was incorporated. Supported through funding from the New York Council of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, ATN commissioned artists to create works for television cablecasting. The non-profit corporation provided production and post-production facilities, and paid expenses incurred during production. Laurie Anderson, Gregory Battcock, John Cage, Douglas Davis, Jean Dupuy, and a host of others, were among the initial artists whose works were produced by ATN. While video art is most often confined to the exhibition arena, the Artists Television Network was committed to the development of "television" as an artistic medium and to the distribution of contemporary arts programming to a broad-based television viewing audience. Through SoHo Television and the Live Show, ATN presented regular weekly telecasts of programs composed of original, innovative works by visual and performing artists on Manhattan Cable from 1978-1983. In 1988, these tapes were donated to the University of Iowa. They are being migrated to digital formats; a small cross-section is also distributed through the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's Video Data Bank.

[Artwords and Bookworks Papers](#) (MsC 517)

(Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, February 28 through March 30, 1978). Co-

curated by Judith Hoffberg and Joan Hugo, *Artwords and Bookworks* was one of the largest exhibition of “artists’ books and ephemera” to take place during the 1970s. Comprised of experimental works by approximately six hundred contributors, the exhibition presented a diverse and provocative sampling of this alternative art form. Following its Los Angeles opening, the exhibition travelled to the Artist’s Space, New York, the Heron School of Art, Indianapolis, and the New Orleans Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans. Although a small number of contributors requested that their works be returned at the close of the venue, the majority preferred that the exhibition be maintained as a record of the event itself. The ATCA holdings include these bookworks and other multiples alongside documentation and other related ephemera. The bound books in the collection have been individually cataloged to the “x” collection and can be retrieved by identifying the title in the exhibition catalog and searching InfoHawk, or alternately by restricting Infohawk to special collections in the advanced tab and searching the title “Artwords and Bookworks”. All other artists’ works, ephemera, and correspondence can be found within this aid.

#### [The CAYC Conceptual Art Collection](#) (see also [MsC 759](#))

A collection of one hundred and fifty large scale works originally assembled in 1972 by Jorge Glusberg, Director of the Center for Art and Communication in Buenos Aires. According to Glusberg, the exhibition was designed to address the contributors’ shared conviction that “the conflicts caused by unfair social relations that prevail in most latin american [sic] countries show up in the artistic arena as well as in other aspects of the culture.” Conceptual artists whose works are represented in the collection include Marcel Alocco, Angelo de Aquino, Siah Armajani, Juan Navarro Baldeweg, Alvaro Barrios, Juan Bercetche, Jacques Bedel, Luis Benedit, Juan Bercetche, Shelia Berkley, Antonio Berni, Cesar Bolanos, Lowry Burgess, Elda Cerrato, Jaime Davidovich, Guillermo Deisler, Agnes Denes, Juan Downey, Gregorio Dujovny, Ken Friedman, Jochen Gerz, Carlos Ginzberg, Haroldo Gonzalez, Victor Grippe, Guerrilla Art Action Group, Rafael Hastings, Dick Higgins, Fernando Huici, Peter Kennedy, Richard Kostelanetz, Uzi Kotler, Bernardo Krasniansky, Auro Lecci, Antonio Jose Caro Lopera, Lea Lublin, Francisco Mariotti, Oscar Matera, Julian Mereutza, Carlos Mills, Jorge Gonzalez Mir, Victor Mira, Abraham Moles, Ion Muresanu, Mauricio Nanucci, Moises Nusimovich, Mariano Hernandez Ossorno, Mari Orensanz, Mila Parr, Luis Pazos, Alberto Pellegrino, Alfred Portillos, Alejandro Puente, Gumersindo Quevedo, Juan Carlos Romera, Ricardo Roux, Javier Ruiz, Bernardo Salcedo, Maximo Soto, Julio Teich, Clorindo Testa, Enrique Torroja, Horst Tress, Nicolas Garcia Uriburu, Jiri Valoch, Constantin Xenakis, and Horacio Zabala. Although originally published by CAYC in an edition of ten and circulated as a travelling exhibition, the ATCA version is the only extant copy of the international activist collaboration.

As a component of The University of Iowa’s Global Focus: Human Rights celebration, the original ca. 1972 CAYC exhibition is once again available to a new public [via the internet](#). This virtual exhibition was funded, in part, by two concurrent grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and was also linked to the CIAO web site at the University of California, Berkeley.

#### [The Buster Cleveland Collection](#) (MsC 785)

A collection of works and papers by one of our mid-century’s most innovative correspondence artists. In the late sixties and early seventies, Cleveland concurrently served as an important link among the California based East Side and West Bay [neo] Dadaists and participants in international Fluxus.

#### [The Steven Durland Papers](#) (MsC 787)

Stephen Durland has long served as the editor of *High Performance* magazine. Although well known throughout the United States, Canada, Ireland, and England as a writer, sculptor, and performance artist, he has also been highly active as an initiator of international correspondence art events and publications. The works and papers collected as the result of

this aspect of his production are housed under the auspices of Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts.

[The Albert M. Fine Collection](#) (MsC 518)

A. M. Fine was a Julliard trained composer, artist, and poet, whose compositions ranged from instrumental works to incidental music to off-Broadway theatre. Although perhaps most widely known within contemporary discourse for his Fluxus works and as a leading exponent of the Mail-art movement (in collaboration with the late Ray Johnson), Fine's cross-disciplinary activities also overlapped with the creative productions of his friends and colleagues Phillip Glass, John Cage, George Maciunas, and Allen Ginsberg. Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts was chosen as the official repository for the artist's works and papers by the A. M. Fine estate.

[The Fluxus West Collection](#) (MsC 763)

A broad cross-section of works representative of most of the participants in the international movement. These materials were acquired in 1980 and serve as the core of the current collection. A large percentage of the works included in the travelling exhibition, *Fluxus: A Conceptual Country*, were borrowed from these holdings.

[The Ken Friedman ATCA Collection](#) (MsC 839)

Perhaps best known for his early collaborations with the late Joseph Beuys, Ken Friedman is considered to be the youngest member of the "classic" Fluxus group. From 1966 through 1975 he served as Director of California-based Fluxus West, while Beuys, in turn, served as Director of Fluxus "Zone" West. Often described as a one of Fluxus' most active philosophers and theorists, Friedman can unquestionably be cited as the collective's most active facilitator following George Maciunas' death in 1978. The artist was responsible for initiating many of the existing institutionally-based repositories committed to the collection of the diverse production of participants in the Vietnam era movement, both in the United States and abroad. The University of Iowa serves as the official repository for the Friedman's works and papers, materials which promise to substantially impact contemporary scholarship in the field. See [Ken Friedman: Art\[net\]worker Extra-Ordinaire](#). See also the Stendhal Gallery's exhibition catalog for [Ken Friedman: 99 Events](#).

[The Alice Hutchins Papers](#) (MsC 758)

American born and Paris based Alice Hutchins' interactive magnetic assemblages re-describe the spectator's role in the artistic process by inviting the receiver to alter her sculptural elements of ball bearings, screws, nuts, bolts, coils, cubes and cylinders at will. The artist's works and papers are housed under ATCA auspices and provide important evidence about the inter-relationship among participants in the Paris avant-garde of the late 1960s and the New York Fluxus collective. See [Alice Hutchins: Arenas for Happenings](#) and the [finding aid](#) for the collection.

[The Estera Milman Contemporary Art Collection](#) (MsC 815)

Primarily ATCA administrative files containing a vast amount of information on the sources of the ATCA collections and detailed records regarding grants won by and exhibitions curated by ATCA staff prior to 2000. Milman founded ATCA in 1982 and served as its director until her departure from the University in 2000.

[The Lil Picard Papers](#) (MsC 817)

Correspondence and related files of artist, art journalist, and collector, Lil Picard (1915-1994), who was born in Germany but migrated to New York City with her second husband in 1936. Exhibiting her own work, her writing about New York City art, and her extensive collecting made her a central figure in New York art until very near the end of her life.

[NC92 Networker Databank Congress](#) (MsC 783)

Coordinated by the Crackerjack Kid (aka Chuck Welch, editor, *Eternal Network: A Mail Art*

*Anthology*, University of Calgary Press, 1995), this unique database consists of 443 indexed items generated by participants in the Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress (August 1, 1991 – March 15, 1992). This year long event was composed of dozens of small congresses during which self-identified “Networkers” convened to discuss issues relevant to the present and future of networking culture as well as concerns relevant to copy art, mail art, computer art, cassette recordings, underground publications, etc. The collection includes correspondence related to the Congress, statements about networking written by Congress participants, little magazines, electronic publications, catalogues, a network bibliography, video and tape documentation, and a chronology.

[Artifacts of the Eternal Network](#) (MsC 781)

Artworks and other documentation related to a 1997 exhibition at the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art. Many Fluxus artists were included in this exhibition.

Other smaller collections include: The Conz-Friedman Collection ([MsC 760](#)); R. Keith Courtney Papers ([MsC 761](#)); Lloyd Dunn Papers ([MsC 520](#)); William Gaglione Papers ([MsC 866](#)); Dick Higgins Collection ([MsC 790](#)); The E.F. Higgins III Collection ([MsC 855](#)); Images from South Africa (I.F.S.A.) Exhibition ([MsC 789](#)); Jonas Mekas Collection of Fluxus Films ([MsC 762](#)); and Zagreb Folios ([MsC 765](#)); Bern Boyle Papers ([MsC 908](#)).

Related materials not part of ATCA include: The Comic Books of the Bronze Age Collection ([MsC 883](#)).

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