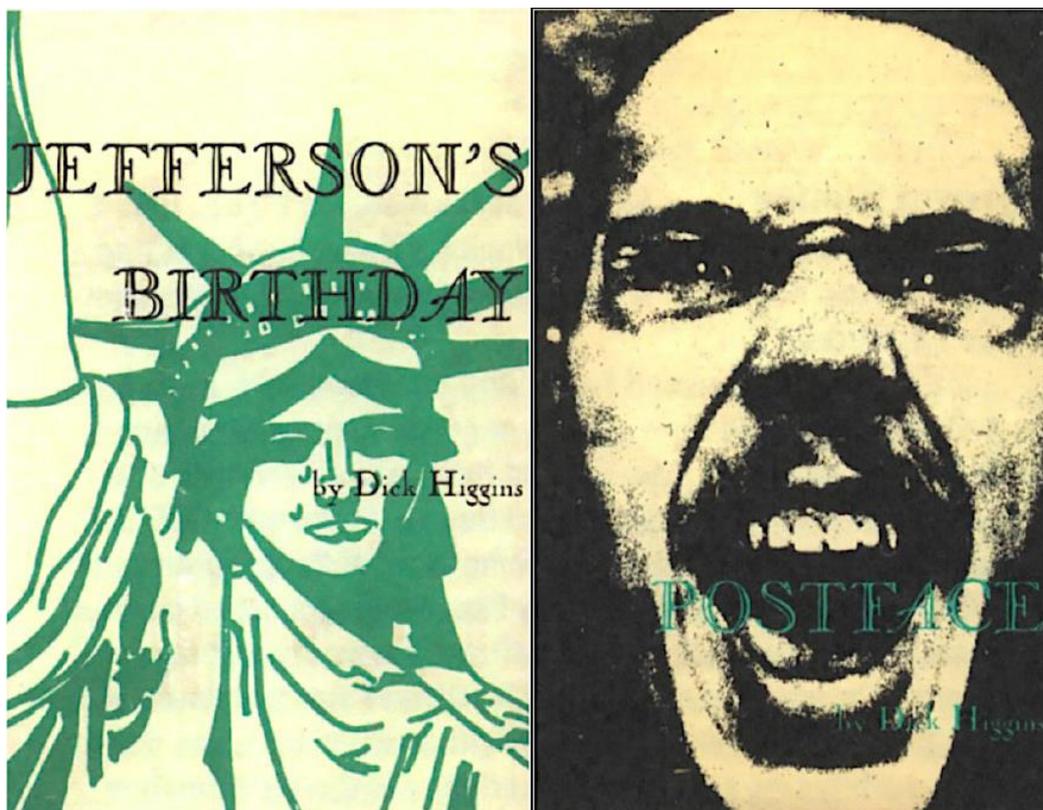


Call It Something Else

Something Else Press, Inc. (1963-1974)



Dick Higgins, *Jefferson's Birthday/Postface*, New York, Something Else Press, 1964

DATES:	27 September 2023 - 22 January 2024
LOCATION:	Sabatini Building, Floor 3
ORGANIZATION:	Museo Reina Sofía
CURATORSHIP:	Christian Xatrec, Alice Centamore
COORDINATION:	Fernando López, María del Castillo, Íñigo Gómez, Fernanda Dávila



AL HANSEN
Hi-Yo Silver The Lone Ranger [Hi-Yo Silver, el
llanero solitario], 1938
68.6 x 40.6 cm
Litografía en color sobre hojalata con trasera de
cartón corrugado
The Emily Harvey Foundation, New York

The exhibition ***Call It Something Else. Something Else Press Inc. (1963-1974)*** focuses on the books, projects and activities of the avant-garde American publishing house founded by the prolific artist, poet, composer, experimental filmmaker, art theorist and publisher **Dick Higgins** (1938-1998) at the end of 1963 and which remained active until December 1974. The exhibition aims to restore the position of the Something Else Press in the history of postwar art and to demonstrate the relevance of Higgins's intermedia in the practices and discourse of advanced art. It will be on view at the Museo Reina Sofia from **September 27, 2023, to January 22, 2024**.

The exhibition is divided into **three sections**. The first one includes archival material that allow visitors to appreciate the publishing house's production as a whole and a presentation of Higgins' theoretical notion of **Intermedia**. The second section is devoted to the program of events and exhibitions of the Something Else Gallery, an offshoot of the publishing house that operated between 1966 and 1972. The third section presents a compilation of the publications launched by the publishing house during its eleven years of existence.

The beginnings of the publishing house

The Something Else Press was created by Dick Higgins in 1963 after his friend George Maciunas, a member of Fluxus, gave him a long time to publish his book *Jefferson's Birthday/Postface*. The need to get his book out as soon as possible turned into the ambitious initiative of founding a publishing house, a project that monopolized his artistic activity for more than a decade. When Higgins told his partner, fellow artist **Alison Knowles**, that he was thinking of creating the publishing house and she asked him for the name, his response was: "Shirtsleeves Press". "That's no good", the artist told him, "Call it something else". So, he finally called it the Something Else Press (SEP).

The SEP production includes books, newsletters, pamphlets, catalogues, bulletins, promotional items, ephemera, music, videos, artist editions and special editions. All of this (including administrative documents related to the publishing house) can be seen in this exhibition that brings together more than 600 works and objects displayed in showcases and walls.

In addition to his publishing production, Higgins promoted the term "Intermedia" to designate the heterogeneous and difficult-to-categorize forms taken by the works of many artists of his generation, those that were situated between two media or more. To clarify his formulation, Higgins provided examples such as these: happenings were the intermedium between visual art, music and theater; sound poetry was the intermedium between poetry and music or sound.

The SEP publishing house brings together the work and critical ideas of artists, writers, architects, musicians and theorists such as **Gertrude Stein**, **Buckminster Fuller**, **Michael Heizer**, **Carolee Schneemann**, **Max Neuhaus**, **Tone Roads Chamber Ensemble**, **John Cage**, **Pauline Oliveros** or **Marshall McLuhan**.

An extensive publishing production

The first section of the exhibition gathers all the materials published by the SEP: books, promotional materials and special editions. The books include the legendary *Great Bear Pamphlets* collection-"the best (and most affordable) little documents on new art," the publisher advertised artist's books in booklet form that sold for tens of pennies, and which Higgins aimed to make accessible in all types of establishments. It also includes Dick Higgins's legendary book *Jefferson's Birthay/Postface*, whose publication led to the creation of the publishing house, and a rendering of Alison Knowles's *The Big Book*, the publisher's most ambitious edition: a livable book nearly five feet wide by six feet tall, which Knowles built in the house she shared with Higgins. Its eight movable pages mounted on rails provided space for a small kitchen, a reading nook, an art gallery and a bathroom. Higgins and Knowles filmed each other activating the book's pages. In this room visitors can see the resulting video, accompanied by a two-channel sound collage that Knowles created during the book's production phase.



Alison Knowles en su obra 'Big Book'
[El gran libro], fotografiada por Peter Moore
1966
Northwestern University Libraries

In this room visitors can see the resulting video, accompanied by a two-channel sound collage that Knowles created during the book's production phase.

In addition, this first section shows all the editorial activity related to the sale and circulation of the books, from badges or promotional balloons to the publishing house's account books. This section includes the *Something Else Manifesto*, which is an unconventional declaration of principles: "We can talk about something, but we can't say that something. It is always something else," reads the 1964's manifesto.

A large central display case features *The Something Else Newsletter* and the *Newscards* that began as a way of communicating the news of the publishing house and later served to disseminate the art and ideas of the Fluxus milieu, as they included essays in which Higgins addresses topics such as the importance of boredom, intentionality or playfulness in art, an explanation of why Gertrude Stein was published so much, or news and rumors criticizing different topics, from the provincialism of the New York art establishment to the publishing monopolies that at that time began to impose themselves on an international scale.

A subsection also lists the unique books and publishing projects once imagined by the Something Else Press but left unpublished, a list that is even longer than the catalogue of published titles.

Something Else Gallery, exhibitions and events



ROBERT FILLIOU
8 Measurement Poems [8 poemas medida], 1966
8 Varas de madera de diferentes largos con varios objetos
Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst vzw
© Estate of Robert Filliou

The second section shows the exhibitions and events of the Something Else Gallery, a space linked to the publishing house, active between 1966 and 1972, located in the living room of the Higgins and Knowles family home in the Chelsea neighborhood of New York.

As soon as it opened its doors, the Something Else Gallery announced a program of five exhibitions: *Object Poems*, *Intermedia*, *Arts in Fusion*, a one-person exhibition of **Wolf Vostell**, and a never-realized Fluxus show. To complete this program of exhibitions, the gallery distributed the SEP's books, and functioned as a concert hall and a space for other initiatives such as workshops, book presentations and readings.

In this section visitors can see **Alice Hutchins'** magnetic and interactive works in a recreation of *Quelques-choses de magnétiques ! (Some Magnetic Things!)*, Hutchins' first solo exhibition. These works were exhibited at the

Something Else Gallery on cardboard pedestals.

Creative projects that make you think

The third section showcases some titles that summarize the thematic scope and varied output of the Something Else Press. Among the selected books are **Robert Filliou's** postcard box of sarcastic questions *Ample Food for Stupid Thought* (1965), the anthology of utopian architectural projects *Fantastic Architecture* (1970), and the musical treatise on biological feedback cycles *Bio-Music* (1974).



JACQUES STRAUCH
Filliou y Brecht delante de La Cédille, 1966
Fotografía blanco y negro
Archivo departamental de los Alpes Marítimos, 30 Fi 3510 (fondo Jacques et Michou Strauch)

These volumes represented, in many cases, a first attempt to document the existence of a certain group of artists, a fleeting adventure or an ephemeral project whose history would have disappeared had it not been for the support of Something Else's publications. This is the case of *La Cédille qui Sourit* (The Cedilla That Smiles, 1965), a project by George Brecht and Robert Filliou, as a bookstore "under the sign of humor" that they opened in Villefranche-sur-Mer, a small town near Nice, which ended up becoming a store run by artists, a "non-shop", a "Permanent Creation Center" that sold artworks, toys, games, ideas, events or Suspense-Poems.

Other projects presented in this section include *Notations* (1969), a collection of musical manuscripts compiled by John Cage. *Paper Snake* (1965), a book of collages sent by mail art pioneer **Ray Johnson** to Dick Higgins in a years-long correspondence. *Cancer in my left ball*, (1973) an experimental book by **John Gorno** with a collection of long and short poems in which he deals with the emotional situation the artist suffered due to his illness. *The Four Suits*, (1965), an exhibition by four artists (Alison Knowles, **Benjamin Patterson**, **Tomas Schmit** and **Philip Corner**) from the Fluxus milieu, whose works exemplified the notion of intermedia. One of the booklets belonging to the *Great Bear Pamphlets*, *Chance Imagery*, written by chemist and artist George Brecht, became one of the publisher's most edited publications and is still a classic essay on the role of chance in contemporary artistic practice. This section also devotes a space to Gertrude Stein, an American writer linked to the Parisian avant-garde scene of the interwar period and the most published author by the SEP.

In addition to these projects, and linked to the anti-conventional approach that runs through the editorial line of the Something Else Press, the exhibition collects, for the first time together, ten experimental films by Dick Higgins, dated between 1959 and 1971.

Catalogue and activities

On the occasion of the exhibition, an extensively illustrated catalogue will be published, including essays by **Alice Centamore** (co-curator of the exhibition), **Johanna Gosse**, **Danielle Johnson** and **Trevor Stark**, as well as a reprint of an interview with Dick Higgins by **Christian Xatrec** (co-curator).

The Cultural Activities Area of the Reina Sofia Museum has organized some activities related to the show, such as a meeting on September 27, with the participation of the two curators: Alice Centamore and Christian Xatrec, who propose a journey through the exhibition to bring the public closer to the artistic practices that the publishing house contributed to disseminate in the 1960s and 1970s. New forms of creation that were based on time, chance and the agency of the public, such as those of Fluxus and conceptual art. The tour will be accompanied by two performances inspired by the playful and performative character of most of the artistic movements that the Something Else Press disseminated. The first is the work *Zyklus*, by choreographer and dancer **Tania Arias**, the second *Let her try*, by artist and writer **Maria Salgado**.

The Educational Activities Area will hold several "translation" workshops under the name of *[unstable office of free translation]* whose objective is to provide a meeting space around a project of free, amateur, reflexive, careful, sensorial, sonorous, playful and literary translation of certain materials of the exhibition. Anyone can participate in this translation exercise, the results of which can also be seen in the exhibition. They will take place on Wednesday, October 25, November 15 and 29, December 13 and 20, 2023 and Wednesday, January 10, 2024 - 18:00 h.

Collaboration:

**B I E
N A L
S U R**

Madrid, 26 September 2023

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