

Phaidon Online: 'Who are The Bruce High Quality Foundation?' by Phaidon News. April 2012.

Who are The Bruce High Quality Foundation?

New York Collective uses animatronic rats, stretch school buses and well known artists to critique the art world



Photo: Phaidon

Written by PHAIDON NEWS for PHAIDON

The idea of the art collective - a social and creative unit formed as a catalyst for change - emerged in the 1960s partly in response to imperialism and moralism and, to a lesser extent, war and destruction wrought by technology. One of the first and the most famous of these collectives was, of course, Fluxus - an international community of artists, architects, composers, and designers organised by Lithuanian-American artist George Maciunas, and including Joseph Beuys, Dick Higgins, Nam June Paik and Yoko Ono. It used performance art, public speaking, and provocatively unconventional sculptures and musical compositions to shift the emphasis from what an artist actually makes or creates to the artist's personality, their actions, and their opinions. Fluxus had a printed manifesto written by Maciunas which outlined its aims, objectives and beliefs.

Manifesto:

2. To affect, or bring to a certain state, by subjecting to, or treating with, a flux. "Fluxed into another world." *South.*
3. *Med.* To cause a discharge from, as in purging.

flux (flüks), *n.* [OF., fr. L. *fluxus*, fr. *fluere*, *fluxum*, to flow. See **FLUENT**; cf. **FLUSH**, *n.* (of cards).] 1. *Med.*
a A flowing or fluid discharge from the bowels or other part: esp., an excessive and morbid discharge: as, the bloody flux, or dysentery. b The matter thus discharged.

Purge the world of bourgeois sickness, "intellectual", professional & commercialized culture, **PURGE** the world of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusionistic art, mathematical art, — **PURGE THE WORLD OF "EUROPANISM"!**

2. Act of flowing: a continuous moving on or passing by, as of a flowing stream; a continuing succession of changes.
3. A stream; copious flow; flood; outflow.
4. The setting in of the tide toward the shore. Cf. **REFLUX**.
5. State of being liquid through heat; fusion. *Rare.*

PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART,
Promote living art, anti-art, promote NON ART REALITY to be fully grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals.

7. Chem. & Metal. a Any substance or mixture used to promote fusion, esp. the fusion of metals or minerals. Common metallurgical fluxes are silica and silicates (acidic), lime and limestone (basic), and fluorite (neutral). b Any substance applied to surfaces to be joined by soldering or welding, just prior to or during the operation, to clean and free them from oxide, thus promoting their union, as rosin.

FUSE the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action.

A similar shifting of focus away from artist to artist's agenda seems to be the aim of newly forming art collectives sprouting up across the globe at the moment. We recently wrote about London collective LuckyPDF who have taken the Fluxus mandate of setting out a printed manifesto to the next, digital level, with its ethos outlined in videos and on websites. Meanwhile, in New York, a very interesting art collective called The Bruce High Quality Foundation sets out its "mission to resurrect art history from the bowels of despair" and to "protest against the star-making machinery of the art market". Mr Bruce High Quality is a fictional artist who supposedly perished in the 9/11 attacks. So far, so art collective.

Like the Fluxus group in the 60s, the collective's members aim to alter the way art and the artist is viewed. Like Fluxus, it has quickly become the darlings of the underground art world. At a time when art stars take centre stage and become brands in their own right, the Bruce collective is working under the shroud of a group name while the revolving core of between five and eight individual members remain anonymous. In recent years The Bruce High Quality Foundation has held an annual 'Brucennial'- exhibitions and performance art that coincide with the city's Whitney Biennial, or as the group's website refers to its work, "The single most important art exhibition in the history of the world. Ever."



The Bruce High Quality Foundation, We Like America and America Likes Us (2010)

Some examples of its work include: Public Sculpture Tackle, an ongoing work begun in 2007, featuring one of the members of the collective, wearing quasi football clothing, climbing and hurling himself against various public sculptures in Manhattan. In 2007 when Ugo Rondinone displayed a sign reading "Hell Yes" on the New Museum, The Bruce High Quality Foundation suspended a similar sign reading, "Heaven Forbid" on the building opposite. Its 2010 show in Miami was curated by Vito Schnabel (son of Julian) and attended by shipping heir Stavros Niarchos III, John McEnroe and actor Steven Dorff.

In 2010, the collective were featured in the Whitney biennial itself and drew crowds that included the likes of David Salle and George Condo to view *We Like America And America Likes Us* – a work comprising a Cadillac repurposed as a portable museum with a video of YouTube clips projected onto the windscreen. This year's Brucennial included work by well-known artists like Cindy Sherman, Ron Gorchov and Jean-Michel Basquiat, something that some critics have pointed out is somewhat at odds with the group's professed ethos of anonymity.



The Bruce High Quality Foundation, *Apology* (2011)

Now, for its latest show, TBHQF will present Stay With Me Baby, an animatronic installation of singing 'union' rats at the Berlin Gallery Weekend this weekend. The aim, according to the group is to bring together apparently unrelated events to demonstrate a collective conscious that we might not have previously thought was there.

According to the group, The apparently unrelated happenings that collide in this piece are: soul singer Lorraine Ellison recording her hit "Stay With Me Baby in 1966"; New York City transportation workers going on strike in January 1966; Ellison dying of cancer in 1983; the first inflatable union rat being used in Chicago in 1991 to protest against the use of non-union workers; and a Michigan court barring Dr. Jack Kevorkian from assisting in suicides in 1991. If you're in Berlin this weekend let us know what you think of it.



The Bruce High Quality Foundation, Teach 4 Amerika (2011)

For a background on the performance art genre, make sure to check out The Phaidon guide to art speak - Performance Art. The Conceptual Art book is also a comprehensive overview of the revolution that took place when a whole generation of artists experimented with the idea of art as an idea. More new art collectives of note are detailed in Phaidon's Creamier.

Stay with me, baby
The Bruce High Quality Foundation
Berlin Gallery Weekend
April 27 - 30th
84 - 85 Wallstrasse
10179 Berlin

Preview: Friday 27th from 5pm