

## FOLDED ART

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The magic in the term “fold” is the secret involved.

From the fold of our thinking selves to that of our processing skin, to that of time and memory, the fold is a subjective allegory, offering sense to the process that exists in all living things and in all relationships.

A fold has physical and abstract aspects at once, with ethical, cultural, social, and political dimensions. The Greeks were the first to deploy the concept of a fold, describing the act of folding as a self-production of one’s subjectivity. The ancient Japanese art of origami has been used both as ritual offering and to pass time at the Bauhaus school. Endless experiments were made to obtain three-dimensional shapes through a series of positive and negative folds, as a model for expression and an integral part of a research process of understanding nature in its folded complexity.

The fold became a concept viewed in terms of space, things, movement, and time. In *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Gilles Deleuze argues that the fold is a model of expression, a body of infinite surfaces that twist and weave through time and space. Deleuze described the cosmos as “an origami universe” that follows a systolic-diastolic folding and unfolding of infinite differences, repetitions, and movements from inside to outside, demonstrating the expanding of the universe.

Deleuze also offers a new interpretation of aesthetics, of Baroque art, and of the work of Leibniz, a brilliant German mathematician, philosopher, scientist, and diplomat. Deleuze argues that Leibniz’s work contains the grounding elements of Baroque philosophy, art, and science in the concept of the monad as something ultimate and indivisible, as folds of space, movement, and time. Leibniz used these elements to comprehend the principles of nature and grace, founded in reason. He also interpreted the world as a body of infinite folds through time and space.

A fold is the two sides of a story, that of any matter in constant motion and variation—a cross-independence of all substances and organisms, producing life. Within the concept of a fold, all objects and thoughts are free of borders and without limitation. Both sides cannot be separated. Each enhances the other within a process, producing (hi)stories, identities, memories, objects, places, spaces.

A fold is a form of connection, solid and elastic at once. It is a portrait of the flexibility of life. Everything is becoming something different than what it was, and in between times and events exist the folds. The fold is the fluid between outer and inner, exterior and interior, up and down, fiction and reality.

In art, each “opus” is the whole world folded within itself, and each expression is one among many possible worlds—all part of the whole, yet each is different in that it reflects the one who generated it. This exhibition comprises a group of works inspired by a cross-dialogue between artists, who at times even created together. All of the works were folded and sent out.

The title of the exhibition, “Folded Art,” is a reference to mail art. Mail art goes back to the 1940s. As Ray Johnson, who founded the New York Correspondence School in 1929, remarked, “history is a very loose subject in which anybody can declare that anything happened at any time at all; and maybe that will be accurate information and maybe it won’t be, and maybe that won’t make any difference.” Johnson’s mailings illustrate how (hi)story-building is an open and creative field within endless folds of connection and reconstruction.

The fold is also related to the Fluxus movement of the 1960s and 70s. Fluxus was an international, interdisciplinary community of artists engaged in experimental art performances which emphasized process over finished product, generating such new art forms as fusion and intermedia, taking into account the “folding times” between things and happenings.

Fluxus approached art not as a commodity but as a process of research, in a holistic approach to creativity, producing intermediary and “intermedia” works as if in a bionetwork, never engaging in a process with a defined conception of its end. The interaction between the elements, the artists, and the audience never ends.

Mail art relies on a system that reinforces the importance of intersection and of human communication and activity. It suggests that the arts maintain a human network of exchange and sharing, existing outside of the traditional worlds of institutional and commercial markets and offering the process as its links.

As an homage to the philosophers Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze and to the latter’s book *The Fold*, an all-female exhibition titled “Fold: Art, Metaphor and Practice” was held in the International Museum of Art & Science. In this exhibition, the artists’ responses to the philosophical propositions of both scholars regarding the word “fold” were made relevant via their examination of various aspects of everyday life, specifically concerning historical, traditional biases against women.

Folded art can pose questions from philosophical, psychological, ethical, social historical, and aesthetic points of view, creating a rich environment of variations in color, form, and concept.

I conclude with a visual journey proposed via “He sees folds everywhere”/Il voit des plis partout” (1998), a film by Guy Girard:

*The fold of a dress  
or a diplomatic fold,  
the fold of the hair  
or the fold of the skin,  
a false fold or a bad fold..  
Apparently, what could be more anecdotal!  
But starting to observe them can turn into an obsession,  
because folds are everywhere.*