

The MAIL-INTERVIEW project
by Ruud Janssen – Netherlands

A 3rd compilation of some mail-interviews

After the first three publication (interviews with Ruud Janssen – celebrating the 25 years in Mail-Art and Mail-Interviews Part 1 and Part 2) this is the fourth publication with 10 more mail-interviews and a copy of the original newsletter that explains the project.

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This 3rd set of mail-interviews was also done in the years 1994-2004 by Ruud Janssen. This publication contains a small collection out of the 80+ interviews that he did in these years.

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INTRODUCTION

All the first publication² with 16 and 12 mail-interviews here is a third collection. They have been published before. Mostly on the Internet, and sometimes in small booklet form with cover and illustrations after an interview was finished. Small circulations always, and sent to the subscribers at that time and some archives like e.g. the MoMa, in New York,

This book is published with a selection of mail-interviews that have historic value and are worth reading for a broader audience. The amount of illustrations is kept to a minimum to make the publication not too thick. Also the Fluxus-related interview are collected in this book. A third and maybe fourth one will appear next year with the other interviews that I did.

I invested several years in gathering all this information. Honoria (Texas, USA) even devoted a complete chapter in her thesis about this project, so I guess these source interviews from the past are worth saving on paper too.

Besides the mail-interview I did with others, there is a selection of mail-interviews some people did with me. Those are published in another book with title "25 Years in Mail-Art". Also published at www.lulu.com.

Enjoy reading this collection,

Ruud Janssen

Breda, April 2008.

ANDREJ TISMA

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH ANDREJ TISMA (YUGOSLAVIA)

Started on: 15-5-1995

RJ :Welcome to this mail-interview. First let me ask you the traditional question. When did you get involved in the mail-art network?

Reply on: 16-6-1995

AT : I made my first mail-art work in 1973 after a visit to one of the pioneers of Yugoslavian mail-art, Bogdanka Poznanovic from Novi Sad. I mailed to her two bus tickets I used going to her and returning home, fixed on a postcard. I wrote beneath them: "My visit to the DT 20 Studio in the formulation of GSP (City Transportation Enterprise)". I think that in that moment I wasn't aware of the mail-art movement.

Later on that year, before I left for Prague, Czechoslovakia, to study painting, she launched an international mail-art project under the title "Feedback Letter-Box" and she invited me to send in something. The project was about letter-boxes; she sent out photos of her letter-box to 45 people, expecting them to send in their's. The project was

open one year, and I sent my contribution in summer of 1974 (a photograph of the building and the window where I was receiving mail in my students' home, and the lady in white coat who was distributing letters). Later, when I returned to Novi Sad for vacation I saw the exhibition which was held in Poznanovic's DT 20 Studio. Participants were, among others, Joseph Beuys, Ken Friedman, Klaus Groh, Jochen Gerz, Janos Urban, Michele Perfetti, J.H. Kocman, Clemente Padin, Sarenco, Natalia LL, and from Yugoslavia Miroljub Todorovic and Balint Szombathy. I was listed under Czechoslovakia.

During my stay in Prague I continued sending mail-art, but only to few friends in Yugoslavia, because I was long away from home (for the first time in my life), so mail-art functioned in my case as continuation of creative contact with dear fellow artists which was interrupted by my leaving for Prague for several years. It was a natural need to stay in touch with some artists, surmounting the great distance between us. Soon after arriving to Prague I bought a rubber-stamp letter print for children, using it to print some words on envelopes and letters. It was some kind of visual poetry and concept art, sent by mail.

Since I studied painting and painting was my main art expression in that time, I used mail-art just sporadically. I also took part in some international mail-art shows in 1979: "Feedback Letter-Box", Zagreb (then Yugoslavia), "Numbers", Allessandria (Italy), "International Mail- Art Fair", Paris (France). Also in the year 1979 I got in touch with Franci Zagoricnik (from Kranj, former Yugoslavia) and Westeast group, which was based on mail-art

communication, publishing the "Westeast" anthologies of visual poetry, using the "Assembling" method of compilation of 300 original works, also making exhibitions. Every anthology had its theme, and I took part in many of them. Through that I got in touch with many mail-art works, but the problem was that Zagoricnik jealously kept the addresses as top secret so I couldn't communicate with all those people. I could just watch their works and slowly get into the international mail-art spirit.

My real involvement in the network happened in 1983 when I met Dobrica Kamperelic, mail-artist from Belgrade (Yugoslavia). Even though we had correspondence for years, we met for the first time by chance in a Novi Sad bookshop. He gave me immediately a bunch of invitations for mail-art projects in Brazil, USA, Europe, also some personal addresses, and soon after I eagerly plunged into that challenging, unexplored field called mail-art network. Since then Kamperelic and I stayed closest collaborators and friends.

Soon I began receiving catalogs, info-zines from all over the world and the list of my correspondents was growing each day. The same year I launched my own mail-art project "Mail - Art Olympic Games", which was organized in conjunction with the XIVth Winter Olympic Games in Sarajevo. In two months I received works by 120 artists from 20 countries, so I began to feel as a real part of the Eternal Network.

RJ: Participating in projects is something else than doing your own project. What did you learn from this first project that you did yourself?

Reply on 1-8-1995 (registered mail)

AT :Yes, it is different. When I began participating in others' projects, or I did mail-art communication on one-to-one basis it was a feeling of great excitement because you send your artwork to somebody unknown, or for some exhibition, for the unknown visitor. There is also a great expectation of some personal reply, or reaction that your work provokes in some spectator's mind, or in mind of a particular and much respected person to whom the work was dedicated. Such reply gives the mail-artist a special stimulus and encouragement for further work. And that is the most important aspect of that kind of communication. Of course important is also exchange of information, also of friendship and kindness. Another important characteristic is that you are choosing your correspondents, even if you are sending out mail massively. Substantially it is GIVING.

A different thing is starting your own mail-art project. The best comparison is with fishing: you throw the fishhook, or even a fishnet, and you wait for what is going to happen. If you are lucky, and if your "bait" is good enough you will catch plenty of "fishes." But in that plenty they will not be all of good quality, and in mail-art there is no throwing back "fishes" into the water. They all must be kept and "eaten." And that sometimes causes little problems. In other words, doing your own project you can't choose your correspondents, except if your invitations are strictly

personal. But the charm of doing your own project is just the uncertainty and great expectation. The same as in fishing. Substantially it is TAKING.

But on the other hand, organizing of a mail-art project requires a great degree of responsibility, unlike the participation, when you are not obliged about nothing. When you organize a project, an exhibition, first you have to collect and keep the arrived works carefully, notify them, make the address list, find the exhibition space, produce a catalog or any documentation (time and money problem), and send the documentation to all participants. You become not just artist, but also a gallerist, writer, publisher and administrator. But I always did that as a kind of a little sacrifice for the international network, glad that I can give my small contribution to the collaboration, establishing new and creative contacts within it. I see every such international project and his organizer as a knot in the net, which keeps the whole together. In that sense, organizing of a show is also GIVING (REPAY).

Another problem with the one's own project is that you suddenly begin to receive a huge amount of mail, without a physical possibility to reply to it (a printed catalog after the show is not a real mail-art reply to an artwork). It can also give you a (wrong) impression that you are so important personality in the net because you get ten to fifteen pieces daily from all over the world. That feeling is very pleasant, but when the project is over your mailbox becomes sadly empty. That's the reason, I suppose, why some people in the network are running new projects one after the other. But it is not real creativity.

My first mail-art project, "Mail-Art Olympic Games" in February 1984, was realized in cooperation with the Novi Sad Television Program "Sunday Afternoon." Actually the exhibition was first shown on the television (installed in the studio), and after that it was installed in the "Forma" gallery in Novi Sad. That was maybe the first television mail-art Show in the history, and it was broadcasted in the whole country, the former Yugoslavia, during the Sarajevo Winter Olympics, so people from different countries, participants and visitors to the Olympics could watch it too, and the show has had millions of "visitors." In the show there were 120 participants from 20 countries after the deadline of only two months. It was a great experience for me. The next year I installed the show in Sarajevo, and that was the first mail-art show ever in that town. After that, in 1986 the show was hosted by Chuck Stake's CCAG in Calgary, Canada. So my first mail-art project gave me plenty of pleasure and excitement.

RJ :Another large project you did was "Nature gives....".
What was the concept of this project?

Reply on 6-10-1995

AT :When you mentioned the word project it reminded me that in fact every artist's project is also a kind of his own artwork. So it can be taken also as self expression. Because the artist is one who chooses the theme of his own project, and he usually chooses the words or sentences that affect him/her the most. So the organizing of your own project is not only taking from the Network, but also playing with it,

expressing yourself through others. I found somewhere a very good definition of today's artist, for whom other artists are the media of expression.

I would also like to use this opportunity to mention three of my earlier mail art projects I did in 1979 and 1980 but unlike "Mail-Art Olympic Games" I didn't get any response to them. The project "My Home" from 1979 consisted of sending to a number of artists a ground plan of my apartment, and a short description of circumstances of my living. It was my try to establish contacts with artists, but not based on art exchange, but on life exchange.

Another project, done in 1980, consisted of colorful postcards with flowers, and on the other side was my rubber stamp imprint saying: "How Are You." The addresses, which I had chosen at random from the phonebook, were printed with a typewriter, and there was no trace of sender. My aim was to surprise those unknown people, to make them reflect about how they are, are they satisfied with their life? They couldn't reply to me because I didn't give my name and address.

The third of my earlier projects (1980) was "Collective Infinite Work." I sent out an empty square and asked from the receiver to draw a line on it, and send it further on. Every artist was asked to draw only one line, until the drawing is completed, in the last one's opinion. The last one should send the completed work with a list of participants to me. It seems that this work will really be "infinite."

Now the "Nature Gives...." project which was your question. You are right, it was a large, in fact my largest project, with 375 participants from 30 countries, with 1,000 works sent in, and a full color 200 pages book as a documentation, sent to all participants. This project came after my also huge "Private Life" project (320 participants) which was shown in fourteen Yugoslavian galleries, so I was exhausted and decided not to organize any new mail art project in at least one year. But then I got a phone call from a cosmetics factory in Osijek, Croatia. They asked me to organize a mail art project in connection with nature and beauty and they will sponsor it. Well, I was pleasantly surprised that someone so far away heard about me and my mail art activity, and wants to invest money in it. So, what could I do, I accepted it, with few conditions: that a large full color book will be printed at the end, and that they will mail the invitations. They agreed, so we launched the "Nature Gives...." in 1988, and it lasted one year. My aim was to make an homage to nature and make artists and viewers all over the world to read and watch again and again the word "Nature" and become more aware of it. It occurred that, taken on the average, every day of that year one artist was sending in works.

When I collected the works in autumn 1989 I went to Osijek, showed them to the sponsor and they were excited. We made agreement that I prepare texts for the book, chose works for reproduction, find the printing-house, and they will pay everything. I engaged a professor from London, Pierre Rouve, art historian (he wrote the screen-play for Antonioni's film "Blow Up") whom I met in Novi Sad, to write an essay on mail art as foreword. Also I asked a

young ecologist from Novi Sad to write on the catastrophic situation in the world, and I myself wrote an introduction about the project.

But as time was passing the situation in the former Yugoslavia was slowly changing. Croatia prepared its secession and soon my sponsor informed me about "financial problems". They suggested that I wait, but things were going worse and worse. Soon, in 1991, military clashes in Croatia began, so it became clear to me that I will have to realize the book myself (I had promised it to participants), and find another exhibition space.

So I had to begin everything from zero, searching for sponsors here in Serbia. It took me one year till I collected the money for printing the book (twelve firms participated). Finally in summer 1992 we opened the show in Belgrade's Cultural Center Gallery. It was a great success and media showed a great interest. It was the time soon after the imposing of the international cultural blockade on our country, so an International exhibition was a great event. The show was later traveling to the cities of Novi Sad, Sombor, Zrenjanin, Sremski, Karlovci, Pristina, Nis,... all over Serbia during the years of the international cultural blockade.

Once I got an information that cosmetics factory in Osijek was bombed and completely destroyed, because it was used for ammunition storage.

That was a little bit sad story about mixing of art and life, mail art and war, ecology and politics. But I should say that

in this case art, Nature and friendship had triumphed. Because in that show, among others, many Croat, Bosnian, Slovenian mail artists participated and the book was sent to all of them, even the war was going on in their republics.

RJ :This international cultural blockade is now lifted for some time. How were the international contacts during the blockade, and how are they now?

Reply on 18-11-1995 (registered mail)

AT :Unfortunately we have to talk about the blockade of Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro), although I would rather talk more about mail art, or Network phenomenon, about art in general, about spirituality, but I hope in this interview we will get back to these issues. The international cultural blockade was imposed on us, so it is logical that the theme of embargo on art is "imposed" to this interview, but it was "imposed" also to the whole Network as a real and crucial problem. So it is worth talking about. The blockade has put the entire networking idea on test, and that was maybe the most important event in the Network (besides the Balkan war) in the last few years. Fortunately, or unfortunately, we the Serbian networkers were here to testify about the embargo's effects and to try to overcome them, with a help of our friends from abroad.

As you might know the international blockade, which included also sports and cultural embargo, was imposed on Serbia on May 31, 1992 (about the righteousness of that I will not discuss now). The United Nations, or their mentors, decided to exclude Serbia and its people from the

cultural exchange. For us networkers, who are working for decades on establishing cultural exchange with all parts of the globe, looking for a planetary culture, that was a great shock. We who contributed so much for years and decades to this humane and cosmopolitan idea, were simply put under blockade without exception. The cultural blockade is inhumane, harmful and inadmissible, but on the first place unnatural in today's globalized world. And that was the reason we raised our voices in protest against cultural embargo. So the postal communication was not the problem, because mail was going almost regularly, as before the embargo, but that feeling of injustice was my, and my friends' main motive to act. I took embargo as a symbol of VIOLENCE of the world authorities which endangers our nice and positive idea of an open network, and my task was to fight against it, for the universal reasons, not the selfish ones. Because, as I said, the postal communication didn't stop, but UN's decision to put one state, one group of people under cultural blockade made me react. So I left almost all other art activities and dedicated my time and energy to fight the MONSTER.

In the moment the embargo was imposed I made a hand-carved rubber stamp with the inscription "EMBARGO ART", and I used it on everything I sent out to the network. During these three years of embargo I made more than twenty anti-embargo rubber stamps, did anti-embargo performances, published anti-embargo articles all over the world, organized many anti-embargo exhibitions in collaboration with Aleksandar Jovanovic, publisher of the anti-embargo magazine "Cage" (in Vichte, Belgium, in Dallas, Tokyo, also in Belgrade, Novi Sad). All our anti-

embargo activity began in Sremski Karlovci, where I organized the Anti-Embargo Net Congress (September 1-3, 1992) where eight of us Serbian networkers signed the "Deblockade of Creativity" declaration which was distributed into the network. We did so many things since then, that one book could be written on it.

Besides me and Javonovic the anti-embargo group consisted of Dobrica Kamperelic, Miroljub Todorovic (Belgrade), Jaroslav Supek, Nenad Bogdanovic (Odzaci), Ratko Radanovic (Srpski Miletic), Jozef Klacik (Novi Sad), and later Vlado Njaradi (Vrbas), Sandor Gogolyak (Odzaci) and Anica Vucetic (Belgrade) have joined us. But maybe the most important was the support by foreign networkers from about twenty countries, who collaborated with "Cage" magazine, published our protests, exhibited our works, visited us here in Serbia, distributed our stuff, supported us morally in letters and publicly in their countries, made anti-embargo works themselves etc. Among them are John Held Jr. (USA), Peter and Angela Netmail (Germany), Jose van den Broucke (Belgium), Shozo Shimamoto (Japan), Hans Ruedi Fricker (Switzerland), Ruud Janssen (Holland), Gyorgy Galantai (Hungary), Crackerjack Kid (USA), Ruggero Maggi (Italy), Clemente Padin (Uruguay), Teresinka Pereira (USA), Livia Cases (Italy) and many others. That brother/sisterhood made us stronger and more decided to fight till the end. In one interview John Held stated: "Yugoslavian networker artists are using their position to signal the condition of their life. They are saying in creative ways that it is wrong to separate people culturally, as well as economically. I'm for an art that is used for a higher purpose than to compliment the colors of

a living room couch. Yugoslav networker artists are freedom fighters and are serving as examples to other network artists. They are reminding us of art's higher purpose. (...) Even though it is more expensive now to mail from Yugoslavia, the artists have kept in touch with other network artists. Their spirits have not been defeated, if anything they seem to have gotten stronger. They have done important things with their anti-embargo art actions. I think perhaps this has made their art even more relevant. Certainly it has given them increased respect throughout the world. (...) With their experiences under cultural embargo, and their creative response to it, they have placed themselves at the very center of network attention".

During all these years of blockade the real problem in communication within the network was our difficult economic situation and foreign anti- Serb propaganda. So back in 1993 the daily monetary inflation was 300% (!), our monthly income was about US\$ 3,-, but the postal taxes were on the world level. So you had to decide if you are going to send a letter by airmail to the USA or buy for that money twelve kilos of bread (bread was almost everything we ate in that time). Of course I always gave the priority to sending the letter. Because to stay in touch with the Network, especially with some of the friends, meant more than bread. It gave us moral support which was important in circumstances when there was no heating in the winter, no fuel for cars or city buses so we had to go everywhere by foot, and sometimes we had electricity only for four hours a day. With your networker friend's letter in your pocket you feel safer and warmer, really.

I mentioned also some misinformation by the foreign media, so during these years I received few insulting letters in which it was written that Serbs are killers, that I cannot be trusted because of Serbs' acts in Croatia, that I am a fascist swine and that my Serbia should be bombed (By the way I had nothing in common with the civil wars which were all fought outside of Serbia, and Serbia as a state was not in war for a single day. But that's a long story). Also many networkers who were invited to come and visit us, because of misinformation and propaganda were afraid to come, although our country was totally safe and peaceful. That was experienced by only few networkers who have visited us since the war began in the former Yugoslavia, like Bob Kirkman (USA), Livia Cases (Italy), Peter and Angela Netmail (Germany), John Held (USA). As Peter Netmail stated in his "DNC Book 92" after visiting Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Odzaci): "It is dangerous to rely on mass media reports in our countries only. Personal eyesight was definitely better. (...) Everyday life was grotesquely normal, even full of hectic consumerism in Belgrade (...), Novi Sad and Odzaci. Every single day of his life Peter has seen in his own Germany home cities more soldiers than in Serbia now. (...) Our networker friends take great efforts to stay cosmopolitan and pacifist within very narrow horizons. Their biggest heroic deed seems to happen in their own hearts, attitudes and consciousness."

In your question you have mentioned that the cultural blockade is now lifted for some time, and you are right, it was suspended in October 1994. But it seems that it is not working in practice, especially in America, Canada.... I was surprised, even shocked when the Chuck Welch's book

"Eternal Network: A mail art Anthology" was not allowed by United States Postal Service to be sent to Serbia. It was in March 1995 when Chuck received his package back with bright red ink imprint "REFUSED". Chuck has informed me, after asking the State Department, that his package was violating the UN embargo sanctions imposed upon Serbia. So the story begins again, and it never stopped, even though we already celebrated the lifting of the Cultural embargo together with John Held on our 1st Post Cultural Embargo Networker Congress, Novi Sad, October 30, 1994. Since I was very angry on such an act by the US Postal Service, and the same thing happened with Canadian too, I wrote an open letter to Welch (on March 29) asking him to protest to his government, and he did so writing to four of his congressional representatives personally (on April 6), asking them "what right have we to create cultural concentration camps of other countries in the world?". Since he was not satisfied with their answers he continued his fight to make possible that his book comes freely to my doorstep. In his correspondence he was informed in October 1995 by the State Department's officer, through Senator Bob Smith that "last year the United Nations suspended a limited number of sanctions, including those on cultural exchange", but that "under current US law, however, Americans are not entitled to sanctions relief, and are still prohibited from engaging in transactions with Serb entities without permission from the Office of Foreign Assets Control". So as you see sanctions are still functioning in some countries, and our fight for freedom of art and cultural exchange must continue. But we must fight all together, if we want some results. Now Chuck is fighting hard; he launched a project into the Internet asking people

to protest by sending letters, post-cards and anti-embargo art to some governmental institutions' addresses in Washington. Let us hope for success. We must first FREE the art and then DO art. Our fight for free art is also art, if it is sincere and humane.

RJ :Just before the falling apart of the large Yugoslavia you started with the "Institute of spreading of love". What was the idea behind this?

Reply on 16-1-1996

AT :Actually I started the Institute when the war in the former Yugoslavia was on its beginning, in November 1991, as the continuation of my previous activities for peace; performances, (spi)rituals, street actions, written statements sent into the Network etc. For example in September 1991, when the war in Croatia was on its peak, I did the public (spi)ritual "Declaration of Peace", in the Peace Chapel of Sremski Karlovci, a Franciscan church, talking about love between people, then breaking knives and lighting candles symbolically, distributing rubberstamp imprints of a big red radiating heart to the audience. And already in August that year I launched the "Love Offensive" campaign and rubberstamp, as reaction to hatred, nationalism and destruction all around me in the former Yugoslavia. I used every opportunity to radiate love, in everyday life, in my art, in the radio, TV etc. So the founding of the Institute for the Spreading of Love was the result and continuation of all these activities, and also an art project. Because I realized, as I stated once, that LOVE is the greatest ART, and greatest TREASURE in this world.

So, dealing with love was pure art for me. The CROWN of it all.

In January 1992 I began publishing the "Love" magazine (bilingual) and sending it all over the world. As I stated in the introduction of the first number, the aim of the Institute was to collect, to record and to study all positive world trends which include feeling, demonstrating and spreading of love. Intention was also to coordinate and initiate events of such kind all over the world, and to radiate love through rituals. The Institute consisted of three departments: for love for the humans, love for the nature and for arts. I sent out invitations for collaboration, and soon I had very good international response. All received stuff was published in the "Love" magazine and sent out to collaborators for free. The Institute and magazine had public presentations in Novi Sad, Belgrade, on radio and TV, in newspapers and even books. In that time Chuck Welch (USA) wrote: "I see Andrej Tisma's Institute of Love as a bold statement and challenge, not without risk, in a war torn Yugoslavia", and Harley (USA) supported me writing: "Your Declaration of Peace Performance with its message of love is of vital importance. The constant roar of all the violence and hatred is hard to fight with quiet messages of love and peace - but effort must be made. It is the last refuge of sanity. Please don't give up and lose your faith - my heart is with you".

It was obvious that people all over the world, and especially in the war surroundings of the former Yugoslavia, are very fond of love, and my Institute was treated very seriously; I was invited to TV shows (the Institute was even announced in the evening TV news,

strongly contrasted to images of bloody corpses from the war-front) to different meetings, manifestations, the magazine was collected by libraries, included in some magazine shows, even got awards, sponsors etc. All those forms of public life of the Institute were fascinating and inspiring for me. My work of art got its real life, it mingled into the everyday life, brought new friends, stirred emotions (one friend told me that he was crying while reading the magazine), did something positive in the awful life of that time, gave hope to many people, gave another image of Yugoslav people abroad. It was my master-piece of art, but also realization of ideals, of the networking principles, of human principles. I entered some new networks and circles of people, nice and spiritual, good willing persons. Giving love resulted in receiving love, and the circle of love was formed.

But when the former Yugoslavia split up into many small countries (in 1992), which was assisted by Europe and USA, the part in which I found myself (Serbia and Montenegro, or the small Yugoslavia) was put under total embargo. All positive things I did were put aside and I had to suffer equally with all my compatriots: women, children, old and sick people under unseen before inhuman circumstances. So I started the fight against the embargo, together with my networker friends (that was the theme of our previous question), and the Institute for the Spreading of Love had to slow down for a while (unfortunately). I have published the last issue of the "Love" magazine in August 1993. But by then I had already organized the Anti-embargo Congress (September 1992), and the first issues of

the "Cage" magazine were edited by A. Jovanovi , in which I was very active for three years.

Now the war is over, and the blockade is suspended. Reasons for further publishing of "Cage" don't exist anymore. So we will see what will be our next activity. I would prefer to come back to the "normal" networking, exchange of views, art stuff, spiritual issues that are mostly interesting for me. Because spiritual development of mankind is the greatest task of our time. It can be achieved through love, compassion, exchange on all levels. So there are many tasks in front of me, and I'll be glad to work on that new challenge which concerns the whole planet.

RJ :Could you explain what you mean with "spiritual development" without getting too technical?

Reply on 21-2-1996

AT :Thank you for asking me that. Because all my art activities, since mid 70-ies, when I was still a painter, were aimed not towards visual or aesthetic explorations, but toward ethical, ecological and humane messages. Because I think that even thought art can not change the world, it can influence people's minds, consciousness, spiritual level.

I remember in 1973 to 1976, while studying painting at the Prague Academy of Fine Arts (I am one of the few mail-artists who have a classical art education, and for me it was maybe more difficult to "jump into networking", leaving behind all I have learned at the Academy) themes of my paintings were, for example, good deeds of people in the

city streets, buses, helping old and sick people, feeding animals, helping poor people etc. After that, when back from Prague, I was painting ecological metaphors, dedicated to the power of nature, of growth, pure energy, etc. That is why discovering of the mail art movement and participation in it was for me a great joy, because I could work with many persons world-wide, apply my ideas and test them in communication. Because for me mail art is not just sending beautiful pieces of paper, but working with living people, spiritual exchanges with them, which leads to mutual spiritual development.

If you remember, the themes of my mail art projects were dedicated to some social, political and ecological problems of our civilization: Mail Art Olympic Games (1984), Private Life (1986), AIDS and Paradise (1987), Nature Gives... (1992), FAX HeART (1994). Also my "Love Offensive" campaign, founding of the Institute for the Spreading of Love, publishing of the "Love" magazine, organizing the Anti-Embargo Net Congress and the three years long anti-embargo campaign world-wide. All these activities I consider to be art, my works of art, which is engaged not aesthetically or visually, but mentally and spiritually.

Besides networking I have since 1984 an other parallel activity I call (SPI)RITUALS. It is direct spiritual exchange with the audience during my performances. In short, it is transmission of my inspiration, or positive energy on people, opening their spiritual channels, widening their consciousness, which is still too narrow. So I am doing my best in its widening. In the last six years I did about forty different (spi)rituals, some of them, since 1991, were aimed

to stop the war in Iraq, then in former Yugoslavia, and finally against the cultural isolation of my country. I did it by radiation of love onto the universe, trying to influence all confronted sides to find peaceful solutions. Now when the war in former Yugoslavia is over, I will dedicate my energy to spiritual development of people around me, and further on, everywhere in the world. Because I believe that artists will be PRIESTS of the future world. Or more precisely, artist, priest and scientist will again become one person, as in ancient times.

I think that the mail art network is a good model for the future world, because it is based on collaboration, love, exchange, tolerance, cosmopolitanism. Also I can say that my (spi)rituals derived from mail art activity. It began with postal exchange world-wide, then it developed into Tourism which was direct mental exchange with people whom I met (I called that kind of art activity "Meet art", before I heard of Fricker's project). After I defined in 1985 mail art network as an "immense collective work of art; pulsating spiritual sculpture that encompasses the world", I began considering all my meetings with networkers to be works of art - spiritual sculptures. After that I realized that I can also meet ordinary people, and that it will still be a spiritual sculpture. So I began with public performances in which I was "meeting" people, unknown people, trying to exchange my inner world with them. And it was working so well. I found a huge new territory for artistic work I call (spi)rituals. I use them for the "spiritual development of mankind" you were asking me about.

I will not get too technical, I'll just say that in my (spi)rituals I mostly use talk, in form of lecture or monologue. After, or during that I distribute some printed materials: flyers, post-cards, Xeroxes, or I apply stickers, badges, or some other material - in order to break the communication barrier with the audience. Sometimes I put rubberstamp imprints on people's hands, or other parts of the body, or I draw or write on them. It is all mental game to open their attention for the present, and to make them active and collaborative. Then I give them my spiritual content, I inspire them, with words or by direct transmission of spiritual energy. You can find more about that in my article Art As Telepathy, Meeting And (Spi)ritual published first in the "ND" magazine No. 14 (February 1991), then in Chuck Welch's "Eternal Network" book (1995). Of course, by doing that I believe I influence not only the present audience, but the more wider territory, using the audience as transmitters of my spiritual energy, by telepathy. That is also one kind of networking, but by using non-material and invisible means.

So, by "spiritual development" I mean that with time people could become better, more compassionate, loving all creatures, less envious, evil, destructive. I mean spiritually more developed people with whom we could realize a new world, a better world to live in all together and in love. I think all of us networkers are striving for that. In some happy moments of networking it seems to me that we are already living in such a world.

RJ :You mentioned before the term Internet, and I know that your views, as stated once to an open letter to Chuck

Welch, were quite specific. Some mail artists are now using e-mail for their communication, others just don't want to use it, and some just see it as a new communication-tool like the FAX is. Are your views about the Internet still the same?

reply on 22-04-1996

AT :In short I would say: in mail art, and especially in Tourism, you are dealing with EMOTIONS, and in Internet with E-MOTIONS! As I consider Tourism to be the greatest artistic achievement in the field of networking, maybe also in the 20th century art, I can't see anything better than personal contact between artists, or the artist and the audience (in performance). Internet can be just a very good tool for bringing people together, but can not SUBSTITUTE GATHERINGS. Because Internet can not guarantee sincerity, can not transmit expression of love, nor can lead to real love (especially between different sexes, as Tourism can). Also you can't feel someone's smell, can't observe his emotional reactions, and so on and on. As I stated to Chuck Welch, back in 1993, Tourism philosophy is a child of a new world of COMPASSION, and Internet is a child of the sterile world of ILLUSION.

Instead of Internet I suggested another solution for the networking, more advanced than Tourism: The Networkers' Teleportation System (By definition given in The Aquarian Guide to New Age, 1990, teleportation is ability to transport physical bodies instantaneously to a new location without moving through the intervening space). In that case, if such vehicle will be available to us,

meetings will be immediate, without exhausting traveling, and it will make creative communication faster, more direct, amusing, unexpected and richer than Tourism and Internet are. It will enable creative people, compassionate people, loving people and happy people to gather in any moment, to stay together as much as they like, with whom they like. To live in Paradise on Earth.

Of course I am not against e-mail or Internet, because I think they are very useful, as telephone or fax are. Sometimes I think I couldn't live without telephone. But when I want to meet some dear person, I prefer to meet her/him personally. Also mail artists, I had many phone talks with some of them, but until we met personally I always felt these contacts to be incomplete, because I couldn't use all of my senses. I felt alienated. On the video screen it could seem less alienated, but in fact it is also only an illusion of contact. Such contacts can only function as additional ones, not the only ones. Of course in the field of artistic communication.

RJ :The problem of course is that teleportation, as you described it, is a fiction, while snail-mail, Internet, e-mail, fax and Tourism are all reality and have existed for several decades (including Internet). Communication is only possible in reality. To be honest I don't believe that from a technical view, teleportation is possible. In your previous answer you mentioned telepathy, and I wonder, is this reality or fiction?

Reply on 2-7-1996

AT :Well, dear Ruud, if you don't believe in telepathy, even though it is obvious to majority of people that it is reality, I can't convince you about that. I just want to remind you that scientific experiments with telepathy have been done for decades in USA and USSR for example, of course for military purposes, and as I read in some scientific magazines, they were very successful. People were sending messages from laboratories where they were totally isolated and under control, to other people who were also isolated thousands of miles away, using only their thoughts. They communicated through some mental energy, some waves which were immediately received on the other side. This ability of living beings (plants can also read our thoughts) is unfortunately neglected in our civilization, which rather relies on communication by language, image or text. For me as an artist it is interesting and challenging to use telepathy in my art, because it gives new possibilities to my expression, and opens a new field of research, which is extremely interesting to me.

Actually I am interested, and working on it, in transmission of emotions, radiating love on people and everything around me, and transmitting my inspiration directly on people without using any classical media for that. I am trying in my (spi)rituals to give people my artistic inspiration directly, to make them feel inspired the same as me. Because in use of any material media the great percent of the initial idea and inspiration is lost. So I am trying, by means of mental resonance with the audience to "tune" their mind to the state I'm in in that moment of enlightenment and try to enlighten them too. I feel I have success in that.

Now concerning teleportation, it is also reality, and experiments proved it. I read one such experiment was done by US Navy in October 1943 in the Philadelphia harbor. They were using Nikola Tesla's electromagnetic fields of low frequency induced by lasers to make one warrior ship (Eldridge DE-173) invisible. In few seconds, after becoming invisible, the ship appeared in the harbor of Norfolk (Virginia) 350 kilometers far from Philadelphia. After the electromagnetic field was disconnected, in few seconds the ship appeared again at the same place it was before, in the harbor of Philadelphia. I am sure such experiments have been done many times, but they are still kept in secret. I hope this technique will be soon improved and will enable networkers to travel faster through space, doing Tourism. I didn't say that Networkers' Teleportation System is possible today, but I was suggesting it as a solution for communication better than Internet. It is not just a fiction.

RJ :I remember seeing a Science Fiction film about the Eldridge, but for me it really is fiction. I studied Physics for six years and have learned to analyze things quite well. For me teleportation is impossible judging the basics of physics. But I guess it wouldn't be interesting in this interview to see what is possible or not. It also has to do with belief I guess. Maybe readers of this interview could give their own opinion on this issue to both of us.

Well, I guess it is time to end this interview now, or did I forget to ask you something?

Reply on 29-7-1996

(Together with his answer Andrej sent me some more of his rubber stamp prints, and the catalog of his recent exhibition at the Association of Artists of Applied Arts and Designers of Vojvodina in Serbia, Yugoslavia).

AT :So we came to the end of our mail-art interview. I think it was a great pleasure for both of us. Our "conversation" took more than one year, and I'm very glad if you thought it was worth doing it through such a long period.

Congratulations to both of us for patience, persistence, good will and energy for exchange of our thoughts, which we had to do besides many more other things we were occupied with.

Of course we could discuss more things, for example my rubber stamp activity which is going on for more than 20 years, and I exhibited stamps this year in the Stamp Art Gallery in San Francisco (250 imprints), and these days in Novi Sad (100 imprints). But maybe you know too much about stamps, since you are one of the greatest collectors of them in the world. Also we could talk about my writing on art, since I am a professional art critic, also about my activities in the field of photography, video-art, about my poetry and prose which I publish for 16 years under the pen-name Andrej Zivor (I have ten books published, two in USA and one in France)... but it would take much more space and time.

If you feel I told you enough about things you were interested in, I'll be glad to finish this great interview, and

I'm eager to see the book ready, in my hands and in the hands of my networking friends. SO LONG and THANKS!

RJ :Also thanks to you Andrej, for this interview. Maybe some other interviewer will ask the things that aren't covered by this interview. I'm sure we'll stay in touch.

IBIRICO

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH IBIRICO (SPAIN)

Started on 30-3-1996

Ruud Jansen : Welcome to this mail-interview. First let me ask you the traditional question. When did you get involved in the mail-art network?

Reply on 19-4-1996

Ibirico : In 1985 I participated in the 1st Bienal of Copy-Art, in Barcelona, with Jürgen O. Olbrich, Sarah Jackson, Rufino de Mingo, Pezuela, Alcalá-Canales, Clemente Padin, etc. The next year, I joined the International Society of Copiers Artists in New York. My works appeared in the ISCA QUARTERLY, volume 5 nos. 2 & 3.

Those were my first and serious contacts with Electrographic Art, which is so important in mail art. (eight years later, I went to the unique Museum of Electrography, located in Cuenca, Spain, invited to work with the latest Canon machines....)

And it was in 1986, when I began to participate in my first mail art project: "O Globo e seus Terraqueos", invited by Gilberto Prado, an active Brazilian mail artist, whom I met, one year later.

RJ : You mention "electrographic Art", as being an important aspect in mail art. Are there also other sides to mail art that are attractive to you?

Reply on 2-5-1996

IB : Of course, one of them is to get in touch with people from different countries, having the same artistic concern. also that you may express your ideas without external pressures, with total freedom. The possibility to choose the mail art project you like, knowing that all your works will be exhibited....

RJ : Are there many active mail art networkers in Spain?

Reply on 8-5-1996

IB : Sure, I'm just arriving from the "III Independent Editor's Encounter" at The Andalusia International University (Iberoamerican Headquarters) in Huelva (Spain), where I met a lot of Spanish Networkers.

Usually you can find always the same people at mail art exhibitions (Antonio Gomez, Antonio Miró, Pere Sousa, Cesar Reglero, Bericat, Nel Amaro, etc.), but since a newspaper article appeared in "El Pais" (most famous Newspaper in Spain), the number of Networkers will be increasing (the article was talking about mail art...)

The Spanish Mail-Art Association has, till the moment, 40 members, but I send the AMAE Bulletin to more than 100 people in Spain, and 100 out.... Also there are more M.A. magazines here (P.O.Box and SOL CULTURAL), so, I think, Spanish Networkers will be more than one hundred now....

RJ : You mention the Mail-Art Association (called "AMAE - Association Mail-Artistas Españoles", when I am correct). When did this start, and what is the goal of the association?

Reply on 22-5-1996

IB : In 1995 I decided to create an Association which includes the most active Spanish Mail Artists, and for this end, I consulted them, one by one, by mail (of course)....

The response was excellent and unanimous: They support and encourage my plan.... I was greatly surprised, because of the independence which is a feature in Artists, in general.....

Now, AMAE is recognized in my country, where I receive a lot of information from Institutions which is materialized in the Bulletin, jointly to Visual and Experimental Poetry, News, a Who is Who, etc. etc. and transmitted to all the networkers in Spain and out.... One of the purposes of the Association was fulfilled....

RJ : What other purposes does the Association have?

Reply on 30-5-1996

IB : Other purpose that AMAE be after too, is a section in his bulletin (?WHO IS WHO?), in which come out all the Spanish Mail Artists (two in each edition), and in this way, we get to know each other better.

Subsequently to publish a guide with the same title, with names, addresses, phone numbers, etc. and to distribute it, among all of us.... (It's an idea that I extend to other mail artists with regards to their countries). And who knows, maybe a Mondial Guide of mail artists, why not? Probably

Ruud, your mail interviews are yet the beginning.... Also AMAE helps to keep in touch all the M.A. of the Kingdom.

To organize exhibitions.... Actually, AMAE prepares one in SANTA DOMINGO (Dominican Republic), but not of mail art, VISUAL & EXPERIMENTAL POETRY, at the "CASA DE TEATRO", which is the meeting place of Dominican Artists and Intellectuals.... I will travel there, carrying the works of European Poets (Although most, Spanish).

RJ : To respond to your remark "your mail interviews are yet the beginning...." I would like to comment that your "WHO IS WHO'S" mostly contain the "facts" of the artists, while I try to get the story behind the person that every mail artists is, and what mail art means to them. What does mail art mean to you?

Reply on 12-6-96

IB : As told by Anna Garcia, Presswoman in The Journal "El País", "For Ibérico, mail art is like a religion....." Now, five years ago from the definition I made in "MANUAL DO VIAJANTE EM PORTUGAL", and valid yet today.....: "Mail art is an art without frontiers, and since few

interest for Galerists and Dealers, because no prices for works. But free-Art. All the mail artists have the possibility to express their ideas, however much peculiar they where, and without the obvious limits in order of commercial factor, which there is no doubt that affects to the creativity, following fashion and according to the clients's Taste."

To add: It allows persons from isolated areas, to keep in touch with other artists, request information, to know what happens in the Artists world. This is what mail art means to me.....

RJ : Will mail art survive now that more and more people start to communicate by computers and electronic mail?

Reply on 5-7-1996

IB : It's not a survival question, but another option, an individual choice.

I don't think the other forms of communication, like e-mail, fax, etc. will scroll down mail art. Some people will feel at ease connecting by other forms than mail.... (could be since smoke signals to Tam-tams....)

Mail art has its own system.... The sending, the waiting for, the surprise comes on an unexpected day..... but then, you touch the envelope which is 3-Dimensional, you'll open it, etc. etc.

From the sending to the receiving, a time process (sometimes, long or short, be implicit....). For some people time is money, but mail artists GEO RIPLEY, hinging to my origin, says: "Time is an illusion in Arab's world".

Personally, I will continue to communicate by mail.... (as I did since the beginning of this interview.....).

RJ : Well, the fun of these interviews I am doing is off course that the communication forms mail artists use is quite different, but IT IS a personal choice. Something I find very important. You mention the saying "time is money", and in mail art there is a saying "mail art and money don't mix" which is a 'hot' topic for already decades. What are your views on this?

reply on 24-7-96

(this answer came from Benidorm where Ibirico spends his vacation)

IB : My point of view on this is quite clear.

I spend a lot of my time doing mail art, without obtaining money in exchange. An important quality of time & money each month. To make and distribute the zine "AMAE"... Facts that demonstrate that the saying "Time is money" doesn't go for me....

Also that till the moment in mail art there is not any possibility of business.

RJ : How involved are you in the Experimental Poetry and/or Visual Poetry?

reply on 23-8-1996

IB : I answer to this question, after being "kidnapped" by the Palestinian Terrorist Saad Mohamed Ibrahim, flying to Cuba, at the Iberia DC-10 (IB-6621), the 26th of July, and deflecting to Miami.....

(the day after being liberated, I meet Abelardo Mena, from the Banco de Ideas Z, at Habana, Cuba).

About 20 years ago, visiting a JOAN BROSSA exhibition in Barcelona (BROSSA is the undisputed leader of the Spanish experimental Poetry), and as a Plastic Artist, I was interested by this strange way to capture and to visualize the Poetry....

And it was from then, when I began to investigate in this way... Actually I take part in all the important exhibitions of Visual and Experimental Poetry in Spain, and all over the world.

RJ : Is it important for you that you take part in all those exhibitions, or is it just a sideway of your work?

reply on 2-9-1996

IB : It's wonderful to take part in those activities, which are so pleasant to me, as much as they have prestige or not.

The most interesting is to contribute with my works, in the fascinating world of Experimental Poetry, which is so important to me, as mail art, painting, engraving, etc.

RJ : Who influences your work? Which artists inspire you the most?

Reply on 8-9-1996

IB : Along my artistic trajectory, a lot of them had an influence in my work.... (as I suppose to all the Artists), but not only Painters (Velazquez, Goya, Van Dongen, Picasso and Duchamp), also writers (Faulkner, Camus, Lezama, Bowles), Musicians

(Mozart, Verdi, Bizet, Penderecki), Film Directors
(Fellini...)

But, actually, nobody bears upon me, or inspire to my works. In any case, some authors please to me more than others.

When you reach certain maturity, and you know what you want, or better: As me, what you don't want, you'll find, and then, you have your own "Mark" which characterize your works. People said: "It's an Ibérico". I continue on that way, getting on with it.....

RJ : What is typical about an Ibérico ?

reply on 25-9-1996

IB : It's hard & difficult to speak about myself, so, I let
Art critics define:

"All is perfectly ordered in Ibirico's work. Clear spaces, and a personal mark, are the factor's expressly choosed by the artist. In the origin of both factors, we find without doubt the engraving influence. The light spaces remembering his color compartment. The Ibirico's mark, was expressed by a kind of labyrinth, of clear lines, almost chiseled

fine geometry, which symbolizes the 'way to nowhere'.

Main identity sign of Ibirico: His labyrinth which have maybe something in common with the little streets in The Kasbah of his native Tangier town.

To the artist, they are purely and simple the results of a process of years of work. A part of his creative Universe, an vocation and rational universe, generally distributed in two areas: A little trimming of space, in which the labyrinth is established in a constant with no beginning and end, kind of 'Horror Vacui' , and in opposition to an area of no intervention, diaphanous, in which last pieces keep closed relation with the different supports choosed.

Because Ibirico, 'habitué' to work in little formats, has decided to pass this time, from the paper to the big spaces (Sculptures, installations, etc....)"

RJ : This texts says that you like to work in 'little formats'. What is the reason of this choice?

reply on 11-10-1996

(seperate I received a brochure with Ibirico's CV)

IB: Really. I like to work in little format.... The reason? Maybe I'm very minuteness and precise when I draw. I don't know if it's correct to call "little works" to 50x70 cm !!

But they are measures that fit in with the kind of work that I perform. Even if, I don't reject the possibility to play with Big formats, as I did circumstantially, a long time ago, in Escariche (Spain), the Mural Paintings measuring 5 x 8 meters. Or installations (8 x 8 meters), or canvas (2 x 2 meters). The fact is, that actually my favorite size to work in, is 50 x 70 cms, so, I'm inclined to speak about half format, certainly it's dependent on the kind of "oeuvres" you can execute in each moment....

As you know, Ruud, you can materialize, and transfer works from little to Big. It's not too hard to do. Simply to be inspired. The rest is as easy as pie.....

RJ : Ten years ago you participated in your first mail art project. If you look back, has the mail art you receive changed over the year. I myself have noticed that the quality of the mail art I get in has become quite poorly. Have you noticed the same?

answer on 8-4-1997

IB : Actually I receive more and more mail art matters,
 and the quality becomes diluted in a large
 quantity....

Bear in mind, that now there are a lot of persons
moving near M.A. , from different fields, and ten
or eleven years ago, mail artists, generally come
from Artistic activities. There arises the question,
is it convenient that mail art reaches everybody or
not.....

RJ : Thank you for the interview Ibirico!

JENNY DE GROOT

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH JENNY DE GROOT
(NETHERLANDS)

Started on: 31-3-1995

Ruud Janssen :Welcome to this mail-interview. First let me ask you the traditional question. When did you get involved in the mail-art network?

Reply on: 5-4-1995

Jenny de Groot:The first time I came across mail art was in 1983, when I was studying photography and design at AKI (Academy for Arts and Industry). One of my teachers was Bart Boumans, who at the time was very active in the mail art circuit. He gave me a list of addresses in Japan: I was doing some 'research' on Japanese calligraphy, and I needed the addresses for information. Among those who replied were people like Shozo Shimamoto and Ryosuke Cohen and voila: there it all began....

RJ : What do you remember about the first contacts with mail artists?

Reply on : 12-4-1995

JdG: Do you mean contacts through the mail or in person? Anyway, on Bart Boumans' address-list was also Byron Black, who was then living in Bangkok, Thailand. He wrote to tell me he was not preoccupied with calligraphy at all so he could not provide me with information on that subject, but he would like to exchange mail just the same. The first audio-cassette came from him, and in 1984 he sent me a video tape that I still show anyone who wants to see it. Until today I never met him in person, although I would love to.

The first mail artists I DID meet in person was Barry Edgar Pilcher.... who responded to my first-project-ever. In 1987 my daughter Esther and I went to see him and his family in their beautiful green valley in Wales. This meeting was an experience I will remember and cherish for the rest of my life.

RJ : Well, I meant the contacts through mail, but it is interesting that you start talking about meeting mail-artists in person. How important is meeting compared to writing to a mail artist?

Reply on : 28-4-1995

JdG: I am not sure if it is really important, but I think it is at least very exciting to meet a mail artist in person, it always turns out to be a quite different event than you expected it to be. Before you meet someone in person you have a certain idea of that man or woman: you only know him or her through the mail: from letters, photographs, sometimes you

know a voice from audio tapes. After a 'close encounter of the personal kind' you find the image you have of that person is totally different from 'the real thing', and the mail you exchange with that person usually changes: it might get more personal, or it might even stop (after I met Pat Fish in april 1993 - or was it 1992 - I never heard from her again....)

RJ : Again you mention the audio tape. Because we already exchanged lots of audio-cassettes I know that you like this medium. What is so special about the audio tape that makes you use it?

Reply on : 2-5-1995

JdG: Audio-tapes can bring an extra dimension into the act of exchanging mail. To hear someone's voice on tape is one thing, but it is also very good to hear all the different sound collages that people make, sounds from the place they live in, pieces of radio-programs, poetry, music: Barry Pilcher is a musician, and since we first started to exchange tapes he has sent me lots of exciting examples of his own work and the work of musicians he admires.

During the performance I did with José Vanden Broucke in 1989 (for the mail art project 'transport, transit, junctions') we used a 30 minute tape with a collage from our collection of mail artists'

audiotapes we received over the years: it is still one of my favorites!

And furthermore I think there is a lot more information you can put on an audiotape than in a written letter.....

RJ : The project 'transport, transit, junctions', what was it about?

Reply on : 13-5-1995

JdG: Transport/transit, junctions was a mail art project that I did for the Palthehuis in Oldenzaal: the works I received (more than 300) were shown there in december 1989/january 1990. The idea behind it was that in/near Oldenzaal traffic junctions come together, and at the time a large transport site was built in the industrial area (of course everyone was free to make his or her own interpretation on the theme, but there were still a lot of cars and trucks driving through my letterbox).

A part of the show were contributions from children, which was particularly fun: I introduced the project to them during a few lessons where I (tried to) explain about mail art (showing work and letting them write to mail-artists). Each one of the four classes (from four different schools) made works for the show.

I would have loved to send everybody a detailed, full color catalogue, but the money I got from the

municipality of Oldenzaal was not half enough to cover all the costs, so I had to keep it cheap.... only a xeroxed booklet with colored cover. Expensive enough though.... But never mind, you know very well what it's like, there is never enough money but you always manage, somehow....

RJ: You also did a mail art show in Hengelo connected to Containers didn't you? What was this all about?

Reply on : 19-5-1995

JdG:' Container Con Amor' was an art manifestation that took place in the summer of 1988 (seven years ago already! Time flies!). Large sea-containers were placed on a square in the center of Hengelo, and in/on and around them several artists showed their work. Some used the container as exhibition space, others made an artwork of the container itself. The mail art project I did for the show was also called 'Container Con Amore', and everything I received was shown inside one of the containers. Because of the unusual way of showing art the show was VERY successful (many visitors, many articles in the press), and the mail art-container was crowded with people during the ten days the 'iron village' stayed there.

RJ : Did you notice any changes in the mail art network in the last 10 years?

Reply on 10-6-1995

JdG: The past 10 years... I must admit that I have jumped in and out of the m.a. circuit over the past five years... there were long periods of time where I didn't contribute to any project or whatever: from time to time I even neglected the contacts with people who are especially dear to me (all this due to various circumstances; job, money, moving (again) and a hundred other things.... all bad excuses, I presume).

But the first thing that comes to my mind are political changes, which led to more mail to and from eastern european countries (and sad enough less or no mail at all from former Yugoslavia). Furthermore I have noticed that there seems to be more 'junk' mail going around.... as if more and more people take the easy way, send a quick xerox and that's it.

And then there are the new media, electronic- and fax mail: myself I prefer the good old 'snail mail' (as you call it), but - as I have access to a fax machine at the place where I work - I did contribute to a few fax projects.

RJ: At the moment you are working on a new project. Can you tell a bit more about the idea behind it.

Reply on 28-6-1995

JdG: The mail art project is part of a larger project called 'Duivels Prentenboek' (Devil's Picturebook), which was started on April 24th 1995 by four women:

Anir Witt, Claudia Heineremann, Josje Eeftinck Schattenkerk and myself. The central theme is the four women in playing cards, and each one of us will take an aspect and work on it.

My part is a mail art project (my first since 1989...!): I invited 52 female artists to portrait themselves as a playing card Queen.... and after a while, when people - like yourself Ruud - started asking questions about the what's and why's, I decided to invite 52 MALE artists as well.... might be interesting to see how they respond to this. At least they respond instantaneously: the Male invitations were sent out several weeks later than the Female invitations, and I already received more male than female works. Maybe the reason for this is that women are more careful in what they want to send and take more time to create something special? I don't know, really.

52 weeks after we started the cards project (in April 1996) this whole thing will result in a mutual exhibition. In this stage we are still looking for a suitable exhibition space: there are one or two places we have in mind, and we are thinking of a church: might be an interesting place, as opposed to a profane subject as this.

In September we have an appointment in Amsterdam with Arno Sinselmeijer, who is a collector of playing cards, and who told us there is at least one game that he knows of where the

Queen has the highest value: an American game from the 1960's, called 'The Queen is High'. And so you learn every day.....

RJ : Is there a difference in the male and female players in the mail-art network?

Reply on 28-7-1995

JdG: Well, there is definitely a difference in the number of male and female mailers. There are MUCH more men involved than there are women. This is a fact, and I don't really know why that is. It is obvious that men are over-participated in all aspects of society, whether it is arts, or politics, or business, or sports, or whatever. But are there any essential differences? Do YOU think there are any?

One thing that I find rather annoying is the fact that the mail I receive from male networkers (some, not all!) sometimes tends to be a bit ambiguous. Like this guy I never heard of who wrote me to say he saw a photo of my daughter Esther and thought she was very pretty. Yes, I know she is, so what! These kind of things have nothing to do with why I decided to be a part of the mail art circuit. This irritates me a lot.

It's also a reason why I stopped sending out selfportraits that show more than my hands or my feet.... or myself fully dressed. Somehow my selfportraits get misunderstood and I receive all kinds of junk in return. Not from those I made it

for, but from people who saw a photo somewhere in a catalogue or whatever, and thought they needed to contact me. These things have made me very careful with what I send.

Is this an answer to your question???

RJ : Yes of course it is. After doing lots of years mail-art I think everybody starts to get 'junk-mail' because there are always newcomers who are reaching out for new contacts. Do you still answer all the mail you get?

Reply on 9-9-1995

JdG: No, I don't. I hardly answer any mail that is not personal: a xerox, or a request ('send your work!') when there is no personal note whatsoever, and I answer none of the junkmail I receive. I answer ALL letters/cassettes/objects/collages I receive..... o.k. it might take some time, but eventually I DO answer! Ofcourse, most of the mail I exchange is with people I have been in touch with for a long time and who have become good friends: we keep in touch, even when it is only once or twice a year.... that happens, you know!

RJ : Do you still have time for photography?

Reply on 23-9-1995

JdG: I really wish I had more time to do whatever...!! I still have to put up my darkroom again.... meanwhile I use a friend's darkroom whenever I

have to print, but these days, with little Anne who needs all my attention, it is hard to find a minute or two.... Don't get me wrong, being busy with this little lady is wonderful and very rewarding: I am not complaining! But I always keep thinking that SOME day (when Anne goes to school maybe?) I will have more time to go on with photography.

Just yesterday I finished a work for a group-exhibition which starts next October: it is a small installation called 'personal history' and it consists of ten small bottles filled with pieces of the industrial landscape photo's I used to make. It looks quite good, and also a bit sad, like ending another chapter....

It's good to be part of the mail art networks: there is always time between things to answer mail or make a collage or send a cassette letter. Or answer your questions in this interview...

RJ : Yes, and I am glad you take the time to answer all those questions I ask you. I remember that when I visited you, you had this organized archive at the Boekeloseweg, with the boxes for the audio-cassettes, the collections of individual exchanges with mail artists, etc. How does your archive look nowadays?

Reply on 29-09-95

JdG: Well, I don't have the place at Boekeloseweg anymore and I moved everything to this place, and

now the 'archive' is here and there and everywhere, some of it stowed away in closets, some of it on shelves, some of it in boxes.

After all the times I moved from one place to another it's hard not to lose track of all the mail art stuff: it is all there somewhere, but even when I DO try to keep it all as clear as possible: when I am looking for something specific it takes quite some time to find it.... but in the end I find it!

The contributions from the projects I did have their own place, and so do the audio and video cassettes, the publications about mail art as well as the mail from the people I correspond with regularly.

I think, over all, my 'archive' is quite organized in its own way. I'd rather use another word, 'archive' sounds a bit like century-old layers of dust and colorless men in faded-brown-suits-with-elbows-shining-through, It is more a collection of mail, of art, and everything between it.

RJ : The newest thing in communication is the use of computers and the internet. I myself am exploring in a critical way this "e-mail" (see also the enclosed concept article I wrote). What are your views when it comes to the use of computers?

Reply on 10-10-1995

(All the answers I got from Jenny de Groot so far were made on the computer she uses at her workplace. Besides

these answers she normally also includes a small note for our personal correspondence).

JdG: First of all... speaking of computers.... this is the first answer I write with a pen, because the place where I work moved to Almelo last week, so I can't use the printer right now.....

Back to your question: When you mean using computers merely to exchange images and/or texts with other computers I must say that it is not the way I want to be working. I want to be able to open an envelope to see what was sent to me, instead of starting up a computer. Also I find it important to reach as many people as possible, including those who do not have access to computers....

Using a computer to create a work of art is something else, it is another way to express yourself, like you do when you make a painting or a photograph, but it is still very new.... compare it with the early days of photography: it is a new medium that will be more and more accepted as a tool in a creative process. It is obvious that you can't just ignore computers and computer art anymore, and I think there are very interesting developments going on that are very much worth our attention.

RJ : Well, I must say I also still prefer the handwritten letters above the computerized ones, but computers do have their advantages. I hope your printer is back at your desk now..... Probably the people who work there with you also see that you produce so

many letters. Did you ever try to explain to them what mail art is all about. And if so, did you succeed?

Reply on 3-11-1995

JdG: Yes, I tried. No I didn't. I think it is too divers: you can't explain the phenomenon of mail art in just a few sentences, unless people are REALLY interested.... And even then the only way to understand is to dive into the network and see for yourself.

Some of my colleagues think I collect stamps, others think I have a lot of pen-pals. Let's leave it at that.

RJ : Did you ever succeed in getting someone so far to "dive into the network?" I remember you once actually did give some mail art lessons, didn't you?

Reply on 22-11-1995

JdG: Yes, I did: this was part of a project called "Art in the classroom" for which I was invited, and I used the opportunity partly for the preparations for the Transport/Transit/Junctions show. I did four classes of mail art for children, at four different schools: they participated in the Transport project, there was a mail art show inside their school. I explained about mail art and ofcourse we sent a lot of mail art

as contributions to various projects around the world. It was fun to do and the kids loved it!

Don't ask me if any of them ever sent mail art afterwards, because I wouldn't know....

Before I forget, I would like to return to your question concerning the use of computers: at the moment there is a VERY interesting exhibition in Enschede on the theme "Obsessions - from Wunderkammer to Cyberspace" : photographic installations, CD ROM's, videoworks and other multimedia projects. This really gives a good idea of how the new media are accepted and used by artists of every background. Go and see it! (till 26 November).

RJ : That sounds very interesting, but there are only three days left to go..... And tomorrow I have to work in Breda, on Saturday I go to a computerfair in Utrecht, and on Sunday there is my mothers birthday and I would like to visit her then..... It seems you are quite up to date when it comes to visiting exhibitions of the many different artforms. Now I think back I remember you often have written me about those visits. Are these visits important to you?

Reply on 29-11-1995

JdG :I am interested in almost every art form, and it's always good to keep up with developments, see what people are doing. Not that I see everything - I must say I miss many shows, even when I am invited. Shame on me!

However, the Enschede-based Photo Biennale is something that started as an idea of one of my teachers at the art academy, in 1984, and since that first show (with Dutch and American photographers) I never missed an edition. The exhibition I mentioned is this year's edition: the concept has changed from strictly photography to a wider perspective: (multimedia projects, etc.) I am curious where it will go from here!

One thing is certain: it will never be like "the old days", when I used to help with the organization: we spent days and days cleaning glass and framing photographs..... Today's complicated installations are built by the artists themselves: they know how and where they want everything.

Anyway, you'll have to wait another two years or so, because yesterday was your last chance to see it.....!

RJ : Well, to give us both some more time to focus on art, maybe it is time to end this interview..... Unless I have forgotten to ask you something?

Reply on 4-12-1995

JdG: I don't know. Have you? Forgotten anything? Let me just mention the playing card project again: we found a great exhibition place in Turnhout, Belgium: at the National Museum of the playingcard. I moved the deadline to April 1996, so people have some more time to send me something interesting! There will probably be money from here and there, so we can make a nice looking catalogue (which will be ready next half of 1996: the show itself will be at the beginning of 1997)

Finally I'd like to say I enjoyed being interviewed by mail, so I could take my time and think about my answers: this interview took exactly 8 months!!
Ok. Ruud, thanks, and see you in the mail!

RJ :Thanks for the interview Jenny!

HENNING MITTENDORF

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH HENNING MITTENDORF (GERMANY)

Started on: 24-01-1995

Ruud Janssen :Welcome to this mail-interview. First let me ask you the traditional question. When did you get involved in the mail art network?

Reply on: 2-2-1995 (I)

Henning Mittendorf: After having studied and practiced fine arts since 1959 (with interruptions), participated in shows and after having had some personal exhibitions since 1970, I decided to enter the network of mail art, i.e to become a conscious - networker in 1980.

During this year I made holidays for four weeks in the months of July and August together with my wife Angela and our two daughters in the Atelier Artistique International de Séguret (F). There I got acquainted with various European artists. One of them, the German artist Aloys Ohlmann, introduced me to mail art. In the meantime we made friends with another; our friendship lasts till today.

RJ : What was the reason for you to become a networker. What attracted you in the first place with this thing called mail art?

Reply on : 10-2-1995 (II)

HM: There has been a mixture of reasons, motives and emotions that caused me to get into the network. During my start with "mail art" I only knew this word meaning to me mailing art itself or ideas about art between artists and other creative persons. As an isolated creative person, artist, I was very fascinated by the possibilities opening before my eyes through art-communication and -exchange with other creative persons.

The word "networker" became accessible for me several years later when I dealt a bit with new sciences (among other with the change of paradigms, system- and communication-theory). Then I recognized mail art as a special alternative Fine art's network among all the other networks and alternative networks within the big network called world, cosmos, totality. Then I accepted the net of mail art as my spiritual and emotional home and well of life.

Now networking attracts me especially for three reasons:

-It corresponds to the change of paradigms according to new sciences. This change teaches that world is no machine, that there exists no teleology and that one cannot recognize an objective reality. There only exists vagueness that one has to fill with viabilities constructed by cognition

and communication, interactions, interconnected with the ones of the fellow-(wo-)men, fellow-creatures.

-It corresponds to the tendency of establishing alternative networks, i.e. networks corresponding to the change of paradigms. More and more (wo-)men struggle for their own matters by themselves. Concerned persons interconnect themselves to find out the best solution for their problems, viability, by interconnection and change of views and perspectives.

-It corresponds to the experiences, especially shocks, artists have got recognizing the commercialization of art and the human catastrophes-productions despite of developed culture, civilization during and after world-war II, i.e. killing of people, racism, holocaust, nature-devastation etc. It corresponds to all these experiences and the lessons the artists drew from them. They aim to make art as concerned persons for concerned persons, in a democratic-participative manner, i.e. not for money, but to enrich nature by enrichment of human culture. They aim at constructing fictional ambivalent up to "open" realities as part of everyday-reality, of micro-, meso- and macro-cosmos.

RJ : In the mail art I received from you from the beginning of our exchange until today you always used self-carved stamps. Did you use this media also before you got involved in mail art? What is so fascinating for you in the carved stamp?

Reply on : 23-2-1995 (III)

HM: Before I did mail art I used for making my fine art works several different techniques, especially drawing, painting, air-brushing, etching, pure and mixed, except among other stamping. I started with stamping, mostly using stamps self-carved out of erasers, when I got involved in mail art. Martina and Steffen Giersch, Dresden, former GDR, introduced me to this medium in 1980. Starting with mail art the range of my fine art's techniques enriched because I got acquainted to some more techniques for my art making like copying, faxing, making and using artistamps, postcards, stickers, andstamps. All these techniques - I think - intensified my art-work, especially strengthened its collaging and "open" character.

I think self-cut rubber stamps are very fascinating, appealing, for the following reasons:

-They are powerful miniatures. Rubberstamps combine big variety in small gracefulness. By self-sketching and/or self-cutting the stamps the artist can express him(her-)self by unfolding shaping power in respect to all themes on modest space with most insignificant means. Mostly the stamps' images more or less originate from the reciprocal actions between official stamps of bureaucracy (state, firms, etc.), playthings (children's mail), stimulations of the other stampers' work and of other materials, media, as well as of the artist's own fancy and skill, the tensions between one-sided authoritarian ratio, planning, and multidimensional, open, unplanned life and art leading to the altering of official symbols, signs and slogans up to the creation of alternative ones. Stamps are a bit original (design) and a bit mechanical (print) powerful miniatures.

-They are as art on a mass basis useful for real democratic-participative art. Primarily stamp prints of mail artists are no official "high level" art ("Hochkunst" - whatever that may be) produced as a single, unique art works to be sold as expensive goods on the art-market to collectors, respectively speculators. They rather are a poor and cheap art form multiplied to carry their short stylized, standardized up to unpersonal, stereotyped expressions as simple and quick as possible widespread into a broader public, especially whithin the mail art network, to let them work on a larger scale in the net and beyond that. So far the rubberstamp prints as art on a mass basis are useful for real democratic-participative art from concerned artists and creative people for concerned artists and creative people. Besides that stamps and their prints can be used - and I do so- in "high level art" too, not least to demonstrate the reciprocal effects between mail art and itself.

-They effect movement and improve cognitions. The gliding along stamp prints, that are repeated, put in a row, turned around, fading, interconnected with other stamp prints or other media etc., of one color or multicoloured (by means of one's eyes and brains) causes despite the short static standardized forms and expressions of the prints, movements and intensifies cognitions, i.e. it strengthens the effects of the very art work. Stamps stir respectively express intellectual and emotional, conscious and non-conscious, verbal and non-verbal forms of self-observation, cognitions, within (wo-)men in a simple, cheap, but effective way.

-They create open (free) interaction and communication. Rubberstamps want to be printed on different things and materials like wood, bodies, cloth, paper (documents, envelopes, postcards, artistamps, books, boxes), etc. They want to be united with other techniques and media of the same artist or of other ones, in short to be used as collaging material for every thinkable purpose. They do have an inviting, asking, answering, signaling, informing etc. dialogical character evoking reciprocal effects up to creating viability. They give impulses for participative dialogues within the single art-work itself up to the democratic dialogues within the network of mail art and beyond that. Stamps thus become a symbol of free borders transgressing interaction and communication fictionalizing, parodizing, criticizing, antiacting etc. against the so called realities, certainties of societies, especially of their ideologies, and thus pointing at the vagueness, openness of reality.

-They contribute to create viable human i.e. ecological and oecumenical, ethics. As non-commercial wide-spread art pieces of concerned (mail-) artists for other concerned (mail-) artists aiming at an interconnected view, perspective, through progress of communication uniting the various artists' cognitions (variety, freedom) to find out contextual viabilities for a human living together with all fellow-(wo-)men, all fellow-creatures, (unity, order) even little stamp prints do help to create valid human, i.e. ecological and oecumenical, ethics and viabilities. As well the most humble and smallest thing, sign, expression can get as chaos-theory does show, respectively the paradigmshift, a bearing within instable networks, which

state the societies of our globe with all their catastrophes' productions do have reached by now. As a part of (wo-)men's creativity small self-cut rubberstamps are not only beautiful, but even effective. They do transgress the special functions of official stamps of states, firms, etc. interpreting society's processes in the interest of the ruling elites by breaking them open, to express more: a higher form of sociability saying and demonstrating at the same time that all can become a matter of communication, a matter of art, of communication as art.

-They contribute to create viability above the abyss of unperceivable reality. Rubberstamp prints like all art works at their best are means to participate in art's communication-processes that are running together with all other communications-processes into the big process called world's, totality's process, i.e. life, evolution, creating viability by cognition and communication of (wo-)men above the abyss of unperceivable reality, always anew.

Single rubberstamp prints on the one hand symbolize the wall up and isolation of the dynamical creativity by standardization and predomination, static pattern, order, of stamp prints. On the other hand they symbolize creativity if used in an alternative way, especially to compose them in a sort of box-of-bricks-system with other stamps or art materials to a new whole, unit, as fanciful combination, metamorphosis, enigma, assemblage of beauty and shocks, as living unknown out of the -perhaps necrophile - known, as larger lifeful participative growing structures combining elements, that have been existing lonely, isolated, dominating before. This use of rubber stamps demonstrates

that at first there is interest in open mixture and interchange of the mixed, viable. At second it shows too that there is interest in birth or death of unique individualities too, as provisional results and challenges of and in evolution's processes.

The art-piece as collage becomes open, free. There doesn't exist any more a central perspective that leads the onlooker through the work, but an accumulation of partial perspectives that lead to bewilderment of the onlooker, if (s)he doesn't use his (her) cognitions and communications to get an interconnected view of viability. Within open collages including rubberstamp-prints, genesis, i.e. the composing and the growing apart, the union and the separation, is determined from totality and the numerous, the whole and its individuals. The process is ruled by a sort of ecological and oecumenical, i.e. symmetrical, powers balancing principle. Above all stands freedom (variety) for love (unity). All stamp-prints within the collaged work do represent the other too, quite different and alien, and as the other, together with the other, forming the whole.

Even if stamp art becomes more mainstream I am not concerned that its popularity will discredit more serious rubberstamp artists. Rather its popularity can be used to make this art, art at all, more democratic. Whether a stamp print has effect or not depends on the fact if it is a dense expression or not, more decoration or more concerned interfering in life's processes. New techniques (like for instance photography) never have set aside in principle older ones (for instance painting). The invention of new techniques has caused differentiation only. The challenge

for the stampers will be to demonstrate the topicality of their stamping within the future.

Especially all these aspects formed by the spirit of Fine art's networking form the background of my working as an artist with self-cut eraserstamps.

RJ : The communication with the help of computers is growing rapidly. It seems this has grown into an even bigger network (INTERNET, Bulletin Board Services, Fax-lines) than the mail art network. At the moment the two networks are touching each other because some mail artist (like myself) are a part of both networks. Will mail art survive in the computer world of the future or will the traditional mail be there for many years to come?

Reply On : 11-03-1995 (IV)

HM: Men (men in the following always means women too) improve their interaction, communication and understanding between their selves, their autonomous cognitions, to find a common horizon for living together, i.e. for constructing a human holistic reality by operational consensi, among other things by differing out and evolving various media for direct and indirect communication.

Today the most effective communication-media are the electronic ones using the computers. The electronic media and appliances extend man's normal common presence in an unexpected manner transgressing the mesocosmos, i.e. the world of the middle, "slow", dimensions, that man is able to perceive without artificial expedients, to the world of velocity, speed, i.e. the micro cosmos, macro cosmos and

the fictions' cosmos, the dimensions of which man is able to perceive only by expedients.

Today's electronic audio-visual mass-media for instance free (or seem to free?) man from abstract distance-keeping linearly thinking of writing and lead back by communicative interconnection and interaction like a revenge of sensuality "to a world of organic multidimensional sensuality". On the other hand all electronic media lead to the strange and abstract sphere of theoretical knowledge and understanding mediated by symbols, words, numbers etc. and belong to the "universal space" of the "unbound spirit", i.e. loosened from embodiment. They procure man with total omni-presence, i.e. global presence as "new time", and with omnipotence, global-efficacy as "new creativity".

Constantly more developed, more effective media of speaking, tones, writing and of pictures' expression lead to always more complex knowledge's organization and to pushes of achievements that on the other hand cause more advanced media, like for instance today's electronic media including computers, newest ways of data processing and transfer, steering's and control engineering interconnected through global networks of electronic memory's and satellites' technology. Selforganisation and accelerating changes fastening their speed and thus cause explosions of media, knowledge, technology and of results, products, of more developed media and so on and so on.

At that modern "information's society" differs out, evolves, three big spheres of communication:

-Mass-communication for "social prices", for instance TV, is the first sphere. In fact that is no real communication, but a public means of spreading informations and ideas indirectly and onesidedly, by one side as firm sender, to an anonymous dispersed audience, the members of which are not perceptible and effective for each other. Feedback comes into existence only by detours, like by reader's letters or by viewing notes.

-Procuring, making available and mediating an unlimited mass of best quality information for market-prices is the second sphere. Herein communication doesn't take place too

-Having ready communication's channels for an "indirect direct" in principle confidential communication for market-prices is the third sphere. It is the place where real communication, i.e. with changing sender and addressee, takes place.

The mail artists, from my point of view better called "alternative fine art's networkers", networkers, according to my definition in the answer to question two, are not confined to the postal system's traditional modes of dispatch, like letter, postcard etc. and the dealing with them. The postal system has been the first network being accessible for everybody in a simple manner and has been used in the name of the new alternative art movement. Today mail artists, networkers, can use all traditional and modern, poor and rich media fitting to their individual

purposes, including new electronic media, computers and channels of worldwide technical networks.

At that the use of electronic media creates big dangers. As to the construction of reality by cognition and communication the "blind" use of electronic media, for instance television, contains the risk that the media push themselves between men, that the media become the message, that the media create, simulate, reality, that they overroll cognitive autonomy of man and his communicative competence and that reality can become manipulated or vanishes.

The electronic media cause floods of informations, the mixing of the on principle different, the splintering of one's self- and world-experience, the pressure of time up to its annihilation, they lead to perception's overpowering effects, to parasocial mute relations, to speechlessness, to addiction to the media and their novelties as well as to their amusements. There arises the risk that the individual is deprived of its autonomous synthetic conduct's ability (self-observation, -knowledge, -determination, -description and self-assertion; cognitive autonomy) and of its coordination within the social integrated system (interaction, cooperation; communicative competence). Then the individual runs the risk of becoming a marionette hanging on the historic-ideological string of society's culture, especially of becoming an appendage of the "universal machine" - spiritually alone, without a moral compass, without a sense of direction producing and consuming in a necrophilic way.

There arise deficits of informing, understanding, observation, reflection, power of judgement leading to false decisions and faulty conduct in respect of the whole. Man becomes overcharged for his cognitive and communicative slowness.

As to the commercializing of the very effective electronic information's and communications systems - except the mass-media - the danger comes into existence that the gap between the rich informed knowing men and the poor uninformed "uncultured" men becomes broader and broader. And the risk arises that the unscrupulous rich individuals use their knowledge for their aims in an egoistic manner taking no regards to its effects violating the whole.

Presupposition of life efficacy of electronic media is that man perceives their special qualities and gets compatible to them. And man has to notice that the various media as standardized interfaces include decisions that he, using traditional media, would make himself. This is a big large field. Presupposition of life efficacy of electronic media is that the individual nevertheless preserves and cultivates its slowness of being, cognitions and communications, interactions etc. of its being, i.e. its social sphere of informing, understanding, oral proceedings, remembering, feelings, traditions and history, its world of commonness. Men have to construct reality socially as a mixed world using parasocial worlds of media of indirect communication and information and above all the social every-day-worlds and their direct experiences. At that they have to interconnect the permanent changes of perspective

and alternative perspectives. And this can be realized in an optimum way by networking, for instance as artist, alternative artist, mail artist.

And a part of every-day-worlds, are and will be in future too the traditional means of communication of the postal system, of travelling, meeting, calling by phone etc. They can be controlled better, simpler, than electronic media, especially as face-to-face communication. And some say that some of the traditional media are more intense.

As part of the every-day-world the traditional media of the postal system will stay. Only if the postal system itself raises the prices to an amount that the use of these media become too expensive then they will vanish more and more. The use of the different media depends on the different purposes of the user, artist.

RJ : It seems you like to document the things that you find out. Do you also keep an archive of all the mail art you receive or do you recycle too?

Reply on : 25-3-1995 (V)

HM: Yes, I not only like to communicate by media and messages found, created, sent out by me, but I like to collect and document own and partners' messages and media too. In so far I do like all communication's means that represent quality for me, whatever quality may be. If the means speak to me, influence my cognitions, fascinate me as having - from my point of view - a rich, complex structure in respect to the process of the whole, then they are dense and of quality for me.

1980, fifteen years ago, when I started with mail art, I intensified my collecting the different and various media of communication by collecting the communication's media of the mail art network - my media and especially the ones I received from my partners.

Visual signs, expressions, media dominate my collection of meanwhile innumerable pieces, all being reciprocal effects of my kind of networking as a rule done by visual means too.

One part of my collection contains documents that I still do use directly for my current networking, like letters, copies of texts and drawings as parts of a running correspondence that I still have to continue, like an invitation for a project, for instance a show or a book, I want to follow etc. This part of my collection that directly is part of my actual networking and art production is strictly speaking my registry.

The other big part of my collection contains documents I received within the network being now remainders of concluded communication's processes that I believe are important for me and the network expressing from my point of view my qualified relation to other networkers. This is my archive in the true sense of the word called by me "HeMiSphere-Archive".

The problem of maintaining a collection, i.e. a registry and an archive, in self-government and self-help obliges in respect to the small own resources to minimize:

-The time spent for the administering of the materials as one needs time for one's family, job and networking etc. too,

-The space for keeping the materials as one needs some space for one's family too and to minimize.

-The utilization of funds as one needs some money for one's family too.

My HeMiSphere-Archive consists of two main sections:

The one part contains the documents concerning my bilateral networking contacts that don't anymore belong to my running communication, correspondence. In the beginning I tried to keep this material sorted under the names of the senders according to the character of the different types of media, like letters and pictures, envelopes, postcards, books and magazines, cassettes, records, documentations etc. To minimize the expenditures for the archive I changed the ordering system. Today I keep the material in postal boxes sorted chronically and then according to the size of the documents. Aim is above all to use the space I have in the best way.

The other part of my archive contains all the documents that deal respectively have to do with my personal (own) work and media. These materials are sorted chronically namely in different lines kept in boxes or files, like:

-personal art theory, like essays

-personal art works, like poems, statements, drawings, copies, books, prints, artistamps etc.

-personal shows and personal mail art projects (shows and book), like invitations, newspaper-cuttings, posters, photos etc.

-personal participations in projects, especially shows, books, artistampsheets, cassettes, like awards, catalogues, posters, lists, newspapers-cuttings and other documentations.

To work with my collection, to activate my registry and especially my archive, for instance for picking out pieces for a show, is not easy, especially for foreigners. The taking documents from my collection, archive, and to arrange it afterwards always is combined with big expenditure of time.

Seldom I recycle the received mail or single mail art pieces. If necessary I make copies.

All in all I am a "born collector" who doesn't like to part from things he likes but who rather likes to keep them. Through collecting and processing documents of the own life mixing with signs of the others's life I believe to create a bit self-duration.

Looking at the pieces of my collection from time to time it becomes a meeting point in spirit with my network partners and their ideas as well as with the other fellow-creatures repeatedly. This creates a bit self-duration by memory and historical sense and deepens the striving for a common horizon of living together by self-finding and self-expressing through daily communication, active

networking, supporting the selection of the special, rich, complex, quality out of the ever flowing flood of novelties.

Mail art archives lead to accumulation of art, ideas, techniques, widening of cognition of the "seeing" men, of thinking and feeling, rationalization and emotionalization of knowledge, of a seeing thinking and feeling. Also the superfluous is handed down and the vote-against gets a chance to make itself heard, i.e. the horizon of social correspondence can become burst open. The own thinking, reflection comprises bigger regions and covers bigger sections of time - in slowness and life supporting duration.

The way of growing, evolution, is overlooked, circumscribed, added up, criticized, interpreted. Personal history, history of mail art, history of culture and of society are represented. An open capable of development structure is evolving within cognitive autonomy of the individual, consciousness of history, society, emotion, languages, media, in short: a richer structure of the individual and as reciprocal effect: of society.

RJ : Sometimes these personal archives get destroyed or sold after the mail artist stops with mail art, or when he dies. I know of Ulises Carion's Archive that was sold and plundered for mail from 'famous' artists, I know of mail artists who have sold parts of their collection to enable them to travel or start with something new. What is the future you would like to see for these archives (including yours) and what will probably be the reality?

Reply on : 13-4-1995 (VI)

HM: My archive and registry, in the following in short: my archive, including my mail-artistic and non mail-artistic pieces represents as mentioned above my relations within the art-net, especially within the alternative artistic network, the Eternal Network.

Up to now I have not thought about my archive's fate, especially after my death. In the moment I cannot imagine that my archive will remain in Frankfurt after my death, because no institution here is interested in mail art, let alone in my archive. But I hope I will live some more years to come doing mail art in Frankfurt. Perhaps the situation will change.

In any case I can imagine that my archive after my death will go to a central "mail art house" or "Eternal Net House" somewhere in Germany or in another country. Some years ago a postal museum of abroad already has shown interest in my archive. But I have not negotiated with it as I think that my archive belongs to me as long as I live as a networker.

To avoid for one's archive the same fate that happened to Ulises Carrion's archive one should negotiate with an interested institution in time. As to my archive I will leave my daughters above all some non mail art works. The rest of my archive should stay together.

Before my death I hope my archive will stay with me. But there can happen unfortunate events that can give the archive an unfortunate fate. For instance poverty can change all plans. My dreams for the storage of my archive

is a special "Eternal Net House" I mentioned above. May be later another better name for this institution will be found.

As part of the network this house should show in an open experimental framework the self- and foreign-understanding of alternative artistic networking, its achievements, possibilities and its claims. It should contribute to the constructions and modeling of mail art culture, networking culture, as mechanism of survival and at that it should integrate the archives of the mail artist. The archives shouldn't lose their functions within the network and shouldn't get ends in themselves. The house should show and function according to the alternative systemic-evolutive paradigmshift being obliged to an interconnected, interactive, constructive, cooperative, pluralistic, discursive, informed rational and thus life-effective, bibliophilic conduct based on experience and viability.

This house should be managed by self-government of networkers for networkers including producers (artists, creative individuals), organizers (mediators), onlookers (recipients) and critics (changers). The house should function according to the aims and rules of networking's culture.

It should support artistic networking separated from economic reasons thus effecting radical popularity and democratization of art by inviting to participate in networking all creative individuals being concerned about alternative art through networking.

This house should become a meeting place, home, for the networkers, a symbol of the human task to get a world-wide time - and all other spheres transgressing holistic and interconnected orientation and construction (unity) of the world-views' freedom and openness (variety) by creativity within a "higher form of sociability", always anew (symmetry as flowing balance).

The Eternal Net House should serve for holding awake the mail art culture, to immunize it, by:

-creating common, communal life-horizons between the individuals within the net and by transgressing it to achieve understanding, tolerance and peaceful living together (creation of simultaneity; network culture's synchronic dimension). At that it should serve for interaction, communication, cooperation, reciprocal effects, experiments, co-sensibility, co-fun, combining the past, the presence and the futures' dreams to construct more complex and richer structures and relations in and for the network.

-making possible orientation to the past through hindering arbitrary suppression of past events, informations of the past, so that every mail artist and every generation of mail artists doesn't have to start again from the beginning (creation of continuity, duration; network culture's diachronic dimension).

-making possible orientation to the past through hindering involuntary suppression of past events, informations of the

past, by screening off the storing of the informations about the past (creation of double-time dimension; network culture's doublechronic dimension).

These aims could become effected by three functional spheres in the Eternal Net House:

-Some rooms and their tools (means, media) should serve for interaction and communication, like for discussion, shows, performances, readings, music, picture shows, workshops, teaching, intermedial interconnection etc. within the house, to other houses, to networkers' homes and studios, to other institutions etc. At all they should not serve for artistic conduct as consecration within special ideal rooms for isolated introverted consideration.

-Some rooms and tools should serve for the storing of archives and informations. It should be possible to activate the informations at any time right away, for instance to allow researching, showing them and working with them as mentioned above. At that they should not be final stores, final deposits, cemeteries of useless artefacts. The archives should be given as gifts from the networkers to the Eternal Net House.

The bringing together of many networkers' archives in so far leads to a concentration of mail art works of all periods and all nations and regions and to the construction of a new common, communal denominator listening to such different names like style, beauty, mail art respectively networking history, form etc. one could call "aesthetic function". Besides there opens a treasure and source of artistic knowledge and artistic teamwork and

interconnection as heritage to the networkers, yes to mankind that it has not known till now. Especially the networker faces this stock, takes it in, puts it in order and changes it within the context of his alternative artistic model of totality, networking, mail art. The mail art, networking art kept in archives gets an "art-historical function", yet "historical function".

-Some rooms and tools should provide service for visitors and lodging for visitors from distant places.

All in all the Eternal Net House should integrate itself into its surroundings and environment, open outward and should make its functions a subject in the discourse of the net. At that in respect to the fact that mankind and biosphere are moving to the abyss and in respect to the new paradigm shift providing the possibility to avoid the failure of the experiment called mankind all this has to do with the self-understanding of culture and art and of the human task to enrich nature by evolving a human culture aiming at an improving living together of mankind as well as the living together of mankind and the other fellow-creatures.

Winners of such a development would be, I think, the networkers, mankind, biosphere, totality. And society as the bigger and more comprehensive network within the network of totality has to sacrifice fancy and money for the support of the net, especially the Eternal Net Houses too, guaranteeing, however, self-government.

RJ : Your art and also your texts indicate that you have strong believes in environmental issues, religion issues, etc.... Where do these believes originate from?

Reply on : 28-4-1995 (VII)

HM: The historian Golo Mann, son of the author Thomas Mann, has written I think in his world-history: "The separation of the personality from its time belongs to the sphere of pathology, more simply said, to the sphere of biology. The very young person knows not yet anything of its fates' epoch, the very old person gives up, does not understand anymore the world, as one says. Only the persons in the middle of their lives have to understand it, for it is their world and there is no other one for them."

Every person standing in the middle of its life wanting not to be separated from its time to avoid becoming a case of pathology has no choice but to deal with the leading thoughts, patterns, of its time. It has to try to find out the leading thoughts and to try to integrate them in its life, especially if the person strives to operate, to live, exemplarily as an artist too. In the artists' works one always can find a dispute with the actual knowledge of their time.

In my Endeavour to take part in life as dealing with reality, world, with all my doing, including my work, art work and mail art, I came across the so called paradigm shift already mentioned above as the most outstanding phenomenon, knowledge, of our postmodern time, especially our postmodern sciences. At that I didn't find a comprehensive completed description of the paradigm shift up to now, but only descriptions of an approach to it.

In the end, I think, the paradigm shift deals with new knowledge of systemic kind found to rule the evolution of the world, reality. It deals with intersubjective cognitions and communications that organize the human knowledge and thus the social systems. The paradigm shift replaces the "classic" in the meantime partly destructive world-view of "naive rationalism, functionalism and determinism" saying that world and its acting units, like for instance man, are similar to machines. It is alternative to the classic world's model. In so far its main aspects from my point of view are the following (in some respect I mentioned them partly already above in other connections):

-Man for several reasons is not able to perceive an objective reality, world, but he only can construct by cognition and communication a (social) viability as reality, always anew.

-The pattern of reality, world, is a model of unity as flowing symmetry consisting of a big changing variety of complex systems, acting units, interlocked and interconnected. According to the respective viewpoint of the onlooker it begins in the more "material sphere" with the quantum-fields of elementary particles passing the ecology of biological systems up to the evolution of sociology, economy, art etc. in the more "spiritual sphere".

-All development, evolution, in all spheres of the world's totality is open; there exist no teleology, no right and no wrong from the scientific point of view.

-The open evolution's process of the relations between the parts, acting units, systems within every system and within world, is ruled by certain principles, especially by

autonomy, interconnection, self-reflexion, self-organization, spontaneity, multidimensionality, irreversibility, differentiation, selection, self-similarity.

-During the history science has destroyed every special role of man within the universe (so called "insults" of man). In the meantime he has become a little part of the whole. However because of the combination of his qualities, especially including his very effective "tool rationality" that he uses now as ends-in-themselves for egoistic purposes neglecting the whole he has become the biggest danger for the world and for himself today.

-In respect to its efficacy all human doing, all cognitions and communications, become important for the whole; every man is responsible for his and the other's doing as all men together construct world as it is by their conduct. Said in another way: Man is unique and indispensable to the creation and preservation of our world and its (human) values.

-On the base of this new knowledge and independent of the fact that there -scientifically seen - exists no teleology, a new conduct, doing, arises, i.e. a new ethics combined with a new myth: Man has to change himself in his and the world's interest. He has to overall his genes' programs, his genes' and personal (individual) egoisms, egocentrisms etc. as end-in-themselves leading to the abyss. He has to integrate himself, his qualities, doings, i.e. cognitions and communications, in the whole, he has to interact, communicate and to coordinate his conduct. At that he has to be easy to get along especially with society, the

generations to come and ecology. Naive rationalism has to become replaced by "enlightened rationalism".

-Presupposition for this change of human conduct is the strengthening of human individual's cognitive autonomy and communicative competence.

-An optimal strategy for successful holistic cognitions and cooperation (by communication) is the intersubjective networking with like-minded persons. It offers its services to find out the viable as (social) reality by interconnected perspective's changes, always anew.

-A special contribution to this task is the contribution of the artists, the artistic contribution. And a very special contribution in the field of art is the one of the mail artists, the one of networking within the network of mail art.

My respective thoughts I have fixed in essays from time to time. The last relevant essay with the theme "The End of Dreamtime?" dates from 1994.

My practical experiences with networking I got by my participation in the net of mail art. Here among other I try to make public my thoughts, including to give impulses for a discourse about paradigm shift too.

My readiness for interconnection, systemic thinking, I guess, reaches back to my childhood and youth. Base has been my (inherited?) liking for the mysterious in all forms, including the religious and the philosophical as well as the nature's phenomena, I found expressed and could express myself best: by all kinds of fine arts (aesthetic) subjects,

making pictures, hearing music, reading. TV has not existed at those times. Especially my parents supported my liking to a certain extent. In so far my childhood and youth have been determined by something like a mysterious religious-philosophical-artistic unity of emotion.

The first conscious impulses in respect to my systemic thinking and to the paradigm shift I got near the end of the 1980-ies by the exhibition in Darmstadt (D) named "Symmetrie" (1986) and the musics- and texts-broadcasting-programs by J.E. Berendt, Germany's Pope of Jazz in those days, as well as his respective books having the same titles, namely "Nada Brahma - The world is Sound" and "The Third Ear - The Hearing of the World" (about 1988). These two events impressed me deeply and my aim since then is to get more and more knowledge about systemic-evolutionary theory and the paradigm shift. The problem is to find texts about these topics written in a way I can understand.

Up to now the following spheres have been of special meaning for my research: Post-classic physics (quantum theory, holoflux respectively holomovement, complex theory of relativity, fractals theory, chaos theory, evolution theory, cybernetics etc.), theory of systems (ecology etc.), neuro-physiology, psychobiology, postmodern psychology, theory of cognition and communication (radical constructivism, mass media etc.), postmodern anthropology, theory of postmodern art (giving up the cult of the genius and the notion of avant-garde etc.) etc,

Besides my research helped me along others to get on with a very special, personal, problem too, namely why I did

choose a "rational job in a bank" despite of my artistic liking throughout my life. I learned that every person consists of different qualities forming an active unit and that there is no basic contradiction between the different spheres where men are working and expressing themselves, that all spheres of society are open and can be transformed into a more extensive, more viable, life-affecting form of sociability and that all things can become a free conscious and responsible artwork. The challenge is to change tensions into creativity, artistic work, artwork, mail art work, society art.

RJ : What mail art project are you currently doing yourself?

Reply on : 11-05-1995 (VIII)

HM: From 1985 till 1995 I did eight international mail art projects including seven shows (dispatched 13 times) and one book.

One can divide my projects into three groups:

-The first group deals with my interest in life, its creative and destructive phenomena. It concerns with questions like: Are you still alive? Why are you still living? What is your life's aim? What dominates life? What to do to survive? The single projects have been: "If still alive, express it to me!" (1985, Frankfurt-Bornheim) , ""Where do you find encouragement?" (1987, Eeklo, Belgium) , "Where leads the voyage?" (1988-90, Murr near Stuttgart, Frankfurt-City; Schloß Ragny, France) , "Who eats whom and why?"

(1993/95 , Neu-Isenburg near Frankfurt, Dresden, Murr near Stuttgart) , "Lachen/Laughing" (Book, 1986).

-The second group works at anniversaries, i.e. at the "importance" of the person respectively the institution that is celebrating the jubilee for the network, i.e. for the relations, communication, in the network. There have been two single projects:

- "Happy Birthday! - HeMi's 50th birthday" (1988, Frankfurt-Eschersheim)

- "Happy Birthday! - Frankfurt am Main 1200 years old! Frankfurt -Er-Leben '94" (1994/95 , Neu-Isenburg near Frankfurt, Frankfurt-Bockenheim, Frankfurt-Sachsenhausen)

-The third group consists of one project I did together with the Versorgungsamt Heilbronn having the theme "The Disabled" (1990/91 , Heilbronn).

For the participation in my projects I mostly distributed white sheets of paper (DIN-A4) through the net to the mailers stamped with the entreaty to send back the sheet after interference. As to the project for Frankfurt's birthday I called for happy birthday postcards and as to the project I did cooperation with the Versorgungsamt in Heilbronn the media have been free. The works are usually shrink-wrapped in clear kitchen-film-strips for exhibition purposes.

The mail art project I did last has been the one for the celebration of Frankfurt's 1200th birthday. In the moment the happy birthday cards are shown for the third time. After that I will try to make the documentation despite the chance that the project will be shown some more times.

In my invitation for this last project I wrote among other: "Accordingly big events, especially various historical exhibitions, cultural activities and festivals, will take place in Frankfurt in celebration of its 1200th birthday during the whole year 1994. These events will be a challenge in a time of upheavals expressing - despite the so called technical progress with self-accelerating techniques', informations' and goods' explosions - increasing human loss of communicative competence especially entailed with rising disappearance of self- and world-experience and at the same time with growing human catastrophes' productions, e.g. with increasing problems of ecology, of new poverty, of anti-alien feeling, of wars and armed conflicts more and more in European regions too - and especially for Germany: of problems concerning its unity. That's why not least mail art should be represented in this big birthday-party by an exhibition on this subject giving the celebrations real world-wide openness, full-ness and joy of life and global attraction...." And according to this are the works that (still) arrive at my home. If the onlooker leafs through the hanged up film-strips and gets involved in the works then they help to find unusual experiences one wouldn't have made otherwise, i.e. affectionate, critical, surprising, even rejection provoking in-sights. In short: They help to find adventures. After all the project is expression of the dynamic interaction and communication

demonstrating that in the world: Europe, Germany, Frankfurt am Main are fatefully combined with all spheres of civilization and their human beings as interaction, i.e. after all blurredly differentiated, as steadily changing parts of the evolving networks: Of the world, of Europe, of Germany, yes of Frankfurt. The project is manifestation of commonness, participation, fullness of life's signs, greetings from human beings to human beings, fullness of life-efficiency. The works provide for Frankfurt's birthday-celebration real world-wide openness, full-ness, life-width, identity, global attractively and create emotional community between the ones who get involved in the project and get touched by its expressions.

A special concern of one of my contributions, namely of my series of happy birthday-cards sent to myself as a monologue now made public by the shows, expressing that besides dialogues and "multilogues" (discourses) also monologues are essential for communication, has been the tactless and unworthy treatment of the invitation and disinvitation to the official birthday celebration of the Dalai Lama by the city of Frankfurt. On the picture-side of my cards I show -partly critical- motives of Frankfurt and on the correspondence-side - in reduction - my correspondence with the official representatives: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Lord Mayor of Frankfurt, the German Chancellor and the German President as well as with the Dalai Lama.

My attempt to integrate the project within the official celebration programme was a failure. The answering letter of the Frankfurter Projekte GmbH, Frankfurt am Main,

dated 01-11-1994 says: "We are sorry, but we are not able to support such a project financially as our budget is spent already by existing projects".

After the conclusion of my preparations for the first show of my project in Neu-Isenburg the artists' group named "Klosterpresse im Karmeliterkloster" and I we noticed that both of us organized separately a mail art project in celebration of Frankfurt's 1200th birthday and we decided to cooperate as to coming shows. Thus we dispatched both our birthday-projects together beginning with the second show.

In the first show in Neu-Isenburg I dispatched my project together with some of my "extra mail art" collages including own artistamps and with some of my first day covers partially created especially for Frankfurt's birthday. I like to demonstrate the reciprocal effects between the mail art net and its products and the other art-sphere and its creations.

During all shows there have been readings of authors. The opening of the show in Frankfurt-Bockenheim was combined with the 25 years jubilee of existence of the Hessian Authors' Federation including readings about Frankfurt. Also there has been jazz-music during the second show. I like it when the different arts do meet and mix.

RJ : Do you still answer all the mail art you get or do you select?

Reply on : 29-05-1995 (IX)

HM: My wish is to answer every from my point of view intensely asking, inviting, signaling, in short: sincere incoming mail art. But as I get a big mass of mail, I have to accept that I really have to select more or less what mail I will answer because of the limitations of my resources, especially of my spare time, money and spiritual-physical energy. Consistently this means that I have to develop standards for selection and that from all the incoming mail some I will answer perhaps never. At the last analysis I think your question leads to the well-known quality-mass-resources-problem of mail art that every mail artist has to solve for himself earlier or later.

According to the change of values caused by the paradigm shift the notion of quality has to be defined in a new manner: Networks, like the one of mail art, are more than the sum of their creative elements, like networkers. The more of every network are the relations between their creative elements, here: The relations between the networkers. These relations characterize and determine the quality of the network. In other words: As spontaneous idea of spirit, cognitions and communications, quality doesn't exist in any isolated structure, like for instance in a networkers head or in any isolated mail art work, but within the open reciprocal effective process of perception, thinking and doing, the network's process that organizes itself. Quality procures for the whole and at the same time for its single elements, reciprocal effects, parts: Greatest freedom, intensity, variety and attractivity aiming at the development of new placed above situations, states, of life, survival, surplus, creation, growing, cognitions, communications, sociability, living together. In the last

analysis it is highest quality that creates and develops all the variety of structures and relations, complexity's evolution, richness of the system as a flowing balance, unique symmetry in progress. In so far quality is not absolute, but relative. In other words: Decisive for the quality's rank is its practical proof, viability, and not the theoretical absence of contradiction following a teleology.

This knowledge makes responsible the artist for all his doing, all his cognitions and communications, and causes him to develop more and more quality within his structure and his relations.

Therefore my aim is to enrichen the living together - as networker especially in Netland - by creating and strengthening an interconnected sight through improving the artistic communication's process, enrichen the process of mail art, including its products, the mail art works.

The qualified mail art works invite the partners by their attractively to participate responsibly in the mail art's communication process to help to construct by its means a pattern, model, formula of the in the last analysis incomprehensible reality, always anew. In accordance with the paradigm shift this purpose cannot be gained art-immanently neither by aesthetic self-healing of art nor by negation of art-traditions and perpetual renewal of art's languages, but only from a set over point of view from outside the art-sphere and from the understanding of man as a non reductable social creative unit and uniqueness. Aesthetics, the doctrine of the valuing experiences-orientated senses' perceptions, have to change as well as

the strategies to create a qualified art-work. This has to aim at an interconnected sight, so that it primary becomes a social and secondary a visual task and problem. It has to be holistic, comprehensive, co-responsible, co-operative, co-sensible, co-evolutive etc.

At that art-works should not be mere informations' media, because there exist better new informations' media than art today. They should not be mere media of eccentricity too, because then their production would need steadily outbidding that would destroy the producing artist finally. Art-works rather should be works of fiction. Then they have at disposal free capacities of all cognitions from thinking to feeling by which -together with the various communications- the incomprehensive reality, vagueness, openness, freedom of all subjects can be expressed and at the same time the attempt can be made to overcome this situation - fictionally, always anew. Fictional art gets a chance of influence even vis-à-vis mass-media, especially TV, if it doesn't veil its fictional character like the simulating mass-media do, but if it demonstrates openly its fictionality, that it embodies an attempt to construct fictionally reality, or if it is not able to do so, to help to endure the vagueness of reality. The fictional character of artistic reality's construction shows openly what otherwise is veiled: The vagueness of reality, that there exists no certainty. If fictionality in comparison with simulation makes possible distance, critic, fancy, in short: Relativity as "breath for living".

And if the construction's process is successful by qualified models, patterns, formulae, in short: Qualified art-works,

then the networker masters the unperceivable reality and at the same time becomes himself mastered by the unperceivable reality.

From the mass of mail waiting in my box to be answered I considering my scanty resources (especially time, money and spiritual-physical energy) select those mail-pieces that are qualified for me: Attracting me to participation, interference, because they give me (additional) "breath for living".

If there are several mail art pieces of the same rank in quality I select considering the character of the mail art partner, the respective deadline, the needed time, energy and costs:

-At the first place stand the mail art friends to whom I already have qualified relations.

-At the second place the mail follows where I have to take into account a deadline.

-At the third place in the rank stands all the remaining mail.

The order of selection can become altered as to my resources that are available, for instance if a new qualified work has to be developed, but I don't have enough time or energy, or if the costs are too high for me in the respective moment. In these cases the production and sending out of not large-scale mail art can move up in the rank. Not large-scale mail art means that it is easily produced because I can

use works already available in my store, or that its cost are lower by comparison.

Quite another thing is the fact of getting out of the communication's process of mail art for a certain time to reflect about one's situation. Here is the place for Teilhard de Chardin's sentence: "To try all and to push forward all till the end in direction to the greatest consciousness: That is in a universe being in the condition of mental changing - as one has recognized - the general, universal and highest moral law; to limit strength (unless this is done to get more strength) is sin".

I already noticed that I don't produce so many mail art pieces as in the beginning of my networking. This has nothing to do with diminishing enthusiasm as it, I think, rather intensifies, but with the fact that my production aiming at expanding my freedom of evolution changes from a quantity's growth to a quality's growth as to organization, i.e. structure and relations, and form, semantics, practice. This corresponds to the natural law: The higher the function, the less the quantity's growth. The interconnection moves its center of gravity more and more from the quantity to quality. It thus meets the cancerous quantity's growth in the whole networker's interest. A more doesn't be a better!

RJ : You are quite optimistic about the potentials of networking. Are there also negative sides to it?

Reply on 21-6-1995 (X)

HM: Dear Ruud, first I want to thank you for your new question and all the patience you take to understand my answers and thoughts as well as to put the texts in the computer. Thanks a lot. And now my answer to your new question.

Certainly my previous answers concerning networking can give the impression that networking itself contains predominantly positive potentials (see especially answers VII and IX). And that is my conviction and intention - from a certain point of view, from the new holistic point of view. And this needs some more explanations as I do see. Here is my new attempt of explaining:

THE NOTION

- The notion of networking as well as its principles and mechanisms like all other notions - according to new science and the paradigm shift - are no representation, reflection, of a perceivable separate "objective" thing, actual (partial) reality, but it is respectively they are always a construction of human spiritual networking. If one searches for the meaning of networking one therefore finds different meanings of this notion. But they are standing in close relation:

NEW SCIENCE

- According to new science totality of world is a network itself of interconnected and interlocked entities being mostly networks themselves as partial networks of the whole. Networking is working together on a scale as broad and deep as possible, i.e. oriented at the whole, in respect

to a certain circle of problems in so far constructing viabilities by trial and error through cognitions (self-determination and -observations) and communication (intersubjective understandings) in the widest sense. Concerned people like mail artists and other creative networkers for instance do concentrate world-wide upon certain problems from the mail-artistic point of view and thus form consciously an own partial network. At that the borders of a partial network can be transgressed and partial networks can cooperate or separate, grow together or differ out new networks. Between the partial networks there exists an overlap taking care that the bigger respectively entire big network has at its disposal a common knowledge, spirit, that is more than the sum of all the partial knowledge.

At that networking at one hand is ruled by the above mentioned (life-) effective principles of creativity (see answer to question VII)

On the other hand networking contains extremely effective methods, techniques, means, mechanisms, in short strategies of creativity, for instance strategies of interaction and of communication aiming at interconnected reciprocal (ex-)changes of perspectives like discursive learning, social cooperation and coordination, common orientation etc. In so far networking means a rational, partly cybernetic-systematical use of (partial technical) interactive and communicative systems for the very effective transmission of informations. Networking in so far means a very powerful potential to transmit informations and make

possible understanding. Examples of technical networks are the various world-wide postal systems.

Networking as complete process, i.e. ruled by the various principles of creativity and using its various most effective strategies - which are both in a process of corresponding reciprocal evolution too - is the creative, namely very special all penetrating and filling mysterious holistic self-similar self-organizing nature of the world. It leads especially to the production and reduction of quantities (reproduction and death), to varieties (variation and selection), to local intensity of variation (aiming aimlessness), to intensity of reciprocal effectiveness (attraction and isolation) etc. Within the network, its partial networks and their networking there are dissymmetrical as well as asymmetrical entities of effectiveness and one can notice breakings of entities, symmetries and of partial networks. All this processing, networking, happens - scientifically seen - without a teleology, without determination, without salvation, but breakings, dissymmetries and asymmetries are only comprehensible and effective with a hidden symmetry in the background.

As totality is a network of processing networks every conduct influences one, two, many, eventually all networks and thus the whole. From the human point of view it influences at the same time especially three levels of "reality's" construction:

- On the FIRST LEVEL, the one of the unperceivable structural coupling order of actual reality every conduct changes actual reality's organization, i.e. its structures and

their relations. Coordinated understanding, balanced conduct in so far means new viable structures and structural states of unperceivable reality.

- On the SECOND LEVEL, the one of the coupling spirit i.e. of cognitions, especially of human cognitions within interconnecting communication(s), every conduct stipulates by a basic order constructing act within the cognitive sphere of the recognizing partner (subjective) cognitions influenced by the individual cognitive structures, experiences and expectations. That means that at the beginning of every communication and understanding stands ambiguity. But reciprocal discursive learning between the communication's partners in the end creates - "by miracle" - viabilities and understanding and that as result can bring consent, refusal or sometimes the common experience of vagueness.

- On the THIRD LEVEL, the social one, every conduct is related to the social context. The conduct and its result are commonly discussed, socially structured, prepared, organized, selected, accepted or not and normed; they are rationalized to give orientation for common, social, living together constructing (social) realities, better viabilities, as substitute of unperceivable actual reality. Social reality, viability, slips between the subject and actual - incomprehensible - reality.

Living and living together means to solve existential respectively common existential problems at that inevitably influencing unperceivable actual reality and inevitably constructing perceivable viabilities as social realities.

This means that every single or common conduct, conscious and subconscious cognition and communication, interaction etc. , including the networking of the mail artists and other creative networkers, contributes to the creation of our world; it means that we all together create the world how it is today.

NEW MYTH

- According to the basic principle valid for every existing entity, including world's totality and all its partial systems, namely to gain duration and therefore to construct a common horizon of simultaneousness for understanding between the fellow-creatures, especially between men, to enable protected creative living together within a stable milieu, in the end within the stable whole, a new utopia of enlightened-rational creativity arises, a new sense creating myth. Networking so far stands for the efficient guarantee of the new myth, i.e. of the new ecological-ecumenical-economical world view and values' order too.

NEW ETHICS

- According to the fact that in respect to human conduct there are no longer limitations within the possibilities of technology in the meantime making possible nearly everything and that the limitations of human conduct are now exclusively in the heads, brains, cognitions and communications, of man, networking is an effective strategy of new ethics too. If the material-ethical principle of totality's keeping is generally guilty, provided, suggested, accepted, then networking becomes a powerful strategy to keep man's milieu, in the end to preserve the

whole world, not least to save his survival too. At that seeing the explosions of man-made global catastrophes' productions man's freedom of choice concerning his conduct narrows to life-effective viabilities. Networking thus is a strategy to strengthen the common life-effective, evolutive symmetry-keeping, systemic reciprocal living together of all creatures within the holistic system of totality.

NEW NOTION

The notion networking defined, constructed, corresponding to paradigmshift and to new science, to new myth and to new ethics contains after all prevailingly positive potentials. Networking in the true sense of the word then is the productive ecological-ecumenical-economical process of interconnected self-organization characterizing the world and aiming in tendency at the preserving of the whole, its partial networks and all its entities - as long as possible.

THE ACTUAL INDIVIDUAL CONDUCT : HOLISM AND EGOISM

The individual decision and conduct, for instance to communicate in the form of conscious networking as a mail artist or creative networker, after all can, however, contradict the new order of values and the principles of the new ethics. For instance individual networking can follow only partial egoistic aims and forget the damage it causes for the whole. Then man conducts, networks, malignantly, and if consciously then culpably malignantly. If the conduct corresponds to his liking then he is evil. Here one

can think of the abuse of the for instance technical networks and networking (see answer IV). The malignant aims can result of for instance all sorts of ideologies, for example of economical, political, religious character. Naive-rationalistic, "blind" egoistic networking leads to the well-known global catastrophes. Many developments seen for themselves, as end in themselves, seem to be in order, correct, but in the context of the network they disturb the processing balance, symmetry, and thus themselves too, as they as a reciprocal effect of the network by oversteering or elimination of counter-reactions have an uncoupled from the network's process wrong goal-directedness, wrong goal-orientation. Such disturbing and disrupting processes threaten to intensify and lead - if the correction of the wrong goal-directedness fails to come - to the collapse of the network. Here one can find the negative sides of a naive blind (wrong) networking and conduct.

In contrast to this the single man conducts, especially networks, communicates, etc., well, positively, correctly, if he orientates all his conduct, doing, to the new order of values, i.e. after all to the welfare of the whole. And the networker for instance then is a good man if his liking in so far corresponds to his doing. Here one can find the positive sides of the "enlightened seeing", networking and conduct.

In so far all networking, interacting, conduct have to be studied, classified and judged, assessed (see my answer VII). Holistic life-effective - conscious and subconscious - networking, conduct, is the task of man in respect to his responsibility for world's fate and his survival. It is true that all realities, better viabilities, are constructed, created,

inter-subjectively, by intersubjective communications, but always, however, by individual cognitions. Thus it becomes clear that misunderstanding and failure are the normal in the process of communication, also in the form of networking, and that understanding and success are miracles.

NEW RESEARCH

Research therefore no longer has to focus on the failure of communication and its strategies like networking, but on the miracle of successful communication, networking, understanding, living together, coexistence. Today at that one has to see that nobody is able to predict if mankind will establish a balance of interests between economics, society and nature as the change will demand highest competence, cause very high costs and will influence deeply everyone's life. Nobody knows if self-control and self-restriction will come before or only after the big catastrophe. The question is: How to manage to persuade mankind to agree to its own survival?

And as a modern optimum strategy to gain viable consistent holistic perspectives of sight and positive common conduct there for me comes into question conscious networking with like-minded, concerned creative people. At that the most effective influence on networks always happens by the change of the own person.

RJ :Since the beginning "the Network" has grown a lot. How many networkers are there nowadays? Is it possible to give an estimation?

Reply on 28-07-1995 (XI)

HM: The notions "network" and "networker" are blurred for me as I mentioned above.

- Every effective, creative, i.e. "living" in a wider sense, entity that has "knowledge" and can conduct correspondingly according to the above mentioned basic principles and basic methods of totality's creativity (see answer X), is a reciprocal effect, networker, in totality's network. Every effective entity gets its right to exist always anew only through its character as reciprocal effect, i.e. through its changing by learning reproduced conduct, like its symmetries, its reproduction, its steering, caused by inner knowledge, conduct's models, leading in practice to survival, viability. The quantity of networkers and their composition within totality steadily change. I think that for instance the number of networkers in totality's "more subtle" spheres, like for instance in the fields of artificial intelligence, increase. Altogether the quantity of effective entities, networkers, within the cosmos is infinite.

- Within the network of totality all human beings are networkers too. They cannot stop networking till their end creating altogether their common network called the 'human' world being a partial - at that most effective - network of the whole totality. There are so far billions respectively thousands millions of networkers, i.e. so many networkers as there are human beings on earth in the moment. And their number will grow - unfortunately. Maybe the increasing of human life's quality can stop this growth.

- Within human world, the only world we do have, there are quite a lot of networks. Among them there are more alternative networks coming into existence as I mentioned above. Concerned people interconnect to solve through improved knowledge by interconnected perspectives' changes their problems in tendency by themselves. Artists and artistic-creative people do so by art means of communication, as communicative and medial concept. Nobody can say, I think, how many of these alternative artistic consciously and responsibly interconnecting networkers do exist. Nobody is able to estimate approximately their number. Nobody has a total survey about the steadily changing situation: In some regions on Earth, especially in the "poor" developing countries or the ones, where authoritarian regimes strictly rule among other by controlling communication, one hardly finds networkers, perhaps underground networkers. As to my last project, the Frankfurt-1200-years-project, most contributions came from Germany (75), from the USA (37), from Italy (24), from Belgium (15), from Brazil (15) and from the UK (14). Some new networks differ out, some vanish. Some networkers define themselves as networkers, others deny their character as networkers, for instance the stampers only working with commercial stamps are contested. I would call them networkers too. Some networkers start, others stop (consciously) networking. Then besides every networker can have close and intense contacts, "exchange" his ideas, media, works, only with a few networkers and can participate only in some projects. And his contacts decrease when his working intensifies its quality (see especially answer IX). But that should not lead to working only with oneself and to a stop of

communication within Netland and transgressing its borders, always anew, because this would cause narcissism and an inhuman living together without understanding.

Sometimes, for instance when organizing an attractive project, one becomes interconnected with quite a lot of networkers. I have had more than 300 participants from up to 35 countries in my projects on an average. Other organizers have had quite a bigger number of participants. For instance the contact's net of Peter R. Meyer from Sweden consisted of around 4000 artists in 1986 (see the catalogue "Mailed Art in Uppsala - Choosing Your Partner, 1994/5 , page 8). When traveling the networker meets other networkers personally. Personal non-mediated, direct, face-to-face communication intensifies understanding by animation, inspiration. The networkers with the probably most personal, direct, face-to-face contacts, I think, are Angela Pähler and Peter Küstermann, the congress '92 post(wo-)men (personal delivery). But this form of communication is costly, takes more of the resources than indirect forms of communication - especially across large distances. The networkers should know what they do to environment when steadily going by air from continent to continent.

Gianni Broi from Italy estimates that mail art has grown into a network consisting of about 10.000 participants during the past three years (see the book "Creativita Alternativa E Valori Umani - Free Dogs in the Galaxy, 1995, page 47). This can be correct. Perhaps Guy Bleus can tell more about this figure as he has the best organized archive in the network, I think. Or?

Against the background of the human-made catastrophes' productions the network is growing according especially to its uneconomic and radical-democratic character calling on and welcoming every concerned creative human being to interconnect to help strengthening the new utopia, new ecological- ecumenical- economical myth, and to participate creating - directly or indirectly - a human world, our world, according to paradigm shift. But all in all the quantity of networkers is not important. Meaningful rather is their quality, the creative will and conduct of the networkers - within an instable, nearly - by human catastrophes' production - "groggy" whole, like chaos-theory teaches. In such a situation even little causes can have big effects.

RJ : Well, I think it is time now to end this interview. Maybe there is something I forgot to ask you?

Reply on 17-8-1995 (XII)

HM: Dear Ruud, as answering always is blurred and therefore is inclined to cause new questions as expression of living and as asking thus is the more essential part of communication, there will be no end of asking and answering - till death. But one has to interrupt the flow of communication from time to time to think over its results, to learn and to get new experiences to make steps to newland. And therefore interviews must have an end.

As to you as interviewer, I thank you very much for your sympathetic patient questioning. And I can assure you that from time to time during this interview caused by your questions I was occupied personally with special aspects,

regions, experiences of Netland first time. And I will have to think them over in the future.

All in all I was glad to have got this opportunity to speak a little about my thoughts concerning artistic networking. In so far I even had fun, sometimes in the sense of "serious fun".

At the interview's end I wish: Keep in touch! - as the networkers say. And as to the future of Netland, yes of world, I want to end with questions of the futurologist Robert Jungk that mankind, networkers, we should take to heart: "Do we truly want these new techniques and media? What are really the contents we do want? Are these new techniques and media qualified for our contents?"

RJ : Dear Henning, thanks for the interview!

JOSÉ VAN DEN BROUCKE

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH JOSÉ VAN DEN BROUCKE (BELGIUM)

Started on 15-7-1996

Ruud Janssen : Welcome to this mail interview. First let me ask you the traditional question. When did you get involved in the mail-art network?

(on July 24th 1996 José wrote to me that he will take part in the interview-project. Probably he will answer in English and partly in Dutch language).

Reply on 23-8-1996

José van den Broucke: Dear Ruud, I first saw the combination of the words "mail" & "art" end of the year 1980. As a name on the list of visitors of the International Cultural Center of Antwerp I received their program for September. One of the issues was about a certain "Antwerp International Mail Art Festival" organized by Guy Schraenen. "Mail-Art" was an absolute unknown idea to me. I had no education, not in general, not in art-history nor any art discipline. I was a dissident from two local art schools, because I had no technical crafts talent and I acted too self-opinionated. I had not heard about Dada, nor about

Fluxus; nobody said anything to me, a working class unskilled angry young introvert mother's darling. After I had met Electric Mirei and learned sex from her and became the father of her children into this society, as a result wonderful madness woke up in my body and mind. I wrote some poems and did some proletarian lectures about the situation of the individual into society. I was also deeply touched by the readings of the 'Alpha Cyclus' of the Belgian writer Ivo Michiels, some writings of Samuel Becket and some documents about Julien Beck's Living Theater.

I started participating to the International Mail Art Festival Antwerp by sending a first message on 23.12.1980, followed by the sending of a series of photocopies. My name appeared for first in a mail art publication on the front page of Guy Schraenen's publication Libellus #4 January 1981. The first reproduction of a fragment of my sent mail art was in Libellus #10 July 1981 page 4. It was a fragment of my letter from 23.12.1980. But the real initiation still has to come. So the next autumn I went to see the International Mail Art Festival exhibition at the Antwerp ICC. As a complete virgin I entered the many huge rooms full of hundreds of letters, collages, small papers, nosenses, audio-tapes, a few chaotic videos and strange 'worthless' mailed objects. I was furious to see all that quantity of what looked as a 'undecodable' chaos to me. I was shocked! I went back home and made a large letter 'for the organizer' to express my consternation. I took a piece of paper from a size bigger than my body and wrote in giant letters on it: "Dear Guy, I was visiting the mail art festival on Saturday 3.10.81, and I was not satisfied! So I ask you, please dear Guy, hang this

piece of paper on the walls at the mail art festival exhibition so that the visitors can see > read > know that I suppose that mail art is only art if it brings me closer to the people, and the people closer to me." I brought the letter the very same night to the post office of Deerlijk to mail it to Antwerp. The next night I got a telephone from "the organizer" Guy Schraenen himself. Guy said that he would not hang my letter above the mail that was already on the wall because by using such a big size I had a kind of totalitarian effect on the exhibition, who's principal form was the multiform quantity of the mostly about A4 sized artworks. We had a telephone conversation and at the end of the conversation the meaning of what "mail art" was in 1981 had opened its mysterious and playful possibilities for me: I was a M.A. enthusiast

(José enclosed copies of the pages that he mentions in this first answer together with his typed answer so I can relive the time he had then.)

In spring 1982 I asked Guy Schraenen a list of mail artists. he sent me 38 names and addresses. I sent them all my "Possible Letter". I received 8 reactions, under which the first letter from Guy Bleus, Pawel Petasz, Vittore Baroni, Rod Summers, Piotr Rypson.

From this first small project I got new addresses, by which I could participate to Baroni's 'Arte Postale!' and Sonja van den Burg's "Show me the way to your star, so we can share from far." This was the start for my first real co-operation. The co-operation with Sonja who was together with Margot van Oosten the editors of "Sun Echo", that was an

important mail-art compilation magazine, lasted many years and gave me a lot of inspirations. By meeting Sonja van der Burg I experienced for first how complex and pleasant human relations and artistic co-operation could join together (the personal contact).

Under the nick name "Mailed A" I did a third project "Send Me Something You Forgot And I Shall Remember". 43 invitations, 15 reactions, under which the first contact with Catastrophe X Jonas Wille, who should also become an important art-partner for many years. Here I also got my first letter from Robin Crozier who sent me a memory/malaise/history form.

So this is my answer to your first question (While writing this answer to you I'm listening to a very interesting radio-program about the punishment of social not accepted sexual activities during the Middle Ages. I don't have to go to my job today. Temple Post M.A. is always deeply influenced by actual circumstances: I don't add life to art. I add art to life.)

RJ: With all the data and copies of the originals I presume that you are documenting your activities quite well. Is that important for you?

(before his answer José wrote me twice that he was working on the answer)

reply on 10-10-1996

(José sent me by separate mail his report about his bicycle-trip from Deerlijk to Habay-la-Neuve, where he met with Baudhuin Simon. With his answer José sent me 15 photo's of the state his TEMPLE looks like nowadays to illustrate his answer)

JvdB: Dear Ruud, I can't find your letter with the second question anymore, but I still remember that you asked me about my archive. You wrote that my first answer to your first question gave the impression that I have a well documented archive.

So in answer I must tell you that I could never succeed in trying to get my M.A. archive in good order nor to get rid of it. The Temple Post M.A. archive is a mirror of my way of living: I dream of a good order but I live in chaos, and I constantly suffer the all too much beauty and quantity but I can't let it all behind. Seen from the contradiction: archived or conserved art versus living art, the archive is on the side of death (framed, catalogued, conserved pieces of art, such as paintings, sculptures, books, photographs, etc.... so all things that are elements of M.A.)

But fighting my love to recycle all old art (the received mail) into new art (the mail to send away) I realize that if we want to show M.A. as art phenomenon or as instrument of logical or non-logical society interventions, we must have a 'product' such as catalogues, exhibitions, reports, books, occasionally or definitive framed works. A good ordered archive is a principal need to be able to take the materials for books, articles, exhibitions, etc.... from it. I think the largest M.A. Archive in Belgium is the Guy Bleus

Administration Centre Archive. When I was at his house and saw all the rooms and racks full of boxes, names, paper, impressions, expressions of all those wonderful people all over our postal world, I wanted to get away, because all that Art(ificial) Life seems to cover the daily life as a monster used to do with its prey. M.A. isn't that strange from the classical exhibited arts: The museum is a palace of death art. Living people must be very careful with it!

Of course as real M.A. freak I want to have 'my archive'! But due to the many correspondents who send me too frequently their interesting things, asking me to answer, to give information's, to feed their day- and night-dreams, to encourage, to give correct information, to discuss by letter, to answer as fast as possible, to send money or to do not send money, to send this letter to that person, to find out where a certain correspondent lives, or what happened with him, to participate to ecological, political, sexual protests and provocation's, etc.... I am not able to order the mail from yesterday and the days before, because every day I have new M.A. to face, care for, work out. On the average I usually receive 5 letters a day and answer the same quantity.

The Temple Post Archive can be described into layers:

* First layer : The received, not yet read, seen, opened mail. (Some days I don't open mail, because I'm mentally not ready to have new impressions. Some mail with too long theoretical texts about art or particular mail art are put aside for a long time, because more important information has priority.)

* Second layer : Opened, seen, read mail that has to be answered. (I try to limit the quantity of this layer by using a book in which I write down the receiving date and the date of answering the letter. Some letters have to wait to be answered four seasons or more. Other letters, particular the love-letters are often answered immediately. Letters which stay too long unanswered are often send to another receiver. I also want to limit the new correspondents by sending their first letter to The Temple to another Networker and only sending the original sender a message in which I warn him that I won't answer his M.A. personally. But as many new correspondents give the impression of being very interesting, I can't resist sending some personal answer.)

* Third layer : The answered but not classified mail. This is an enormous mountain. Different mountains. To slow down the speed of communication I also often wait several days to bring answers in addressed already closed envelopes to the post-office. To exclude misunderstandings I use my stamp 'closed but not send on.....'

* Forth layer : The Archive itself. Boxes with classified mail. I classify the received mail country by country. When a certain sender has enough sent mail, I give a complete box to his M.A. Some senders have more than one box. I also try (in which I failed until today) to make list on the kind of mail I receive: Postcards, artistamps, photos, art-books, stickers, rubber stamps, audio-tapes, video-tapes, catalogues. But as I wrote before: The Temple Archive is a Temple of Chaos. No classification System

succeeds long enough. Systems are mixed with systems and crossed by periods of non classification, I'm too slow to be able to control the Temple Post Network Section.

Usually I send more than I receive. It takes a lot of my life-time and money. The last time I ordered the mail from this pre-classification (third layer) into the real archive classification (forth layer) was in may 1995! (with the aid of my children.) So you can imagine what a hell it is to me when I want to find back a certain text or artistamp or postcard etc.... to use it as comment-material in an exhibition or to document an article or talk about the M.A. movement. It is as going to Hades to find back the wandering soul of an unforgettable companion. So in order to develop my love and hate feelings towards 'archiving-ordering' I can do three things:

- 1 Burn or throw it all away.
- 2 Ask every sender what I must do with the mail he/she ever sent to the Temple (what should be an immense work).
- 3 Accept the lovely chaos that all senders and myself create around me.

Mostly I try to do the third. Sometimes I use received mail as original (no copying) material to answer the senders or someone else, sometimes I throw it away somewhere in town, on the road, in a station or pub, etc..., so that an occasional finder can possibly get 'touched' by the poetry of

M.A. (the principle power of the Network as a movement.)
When I received disgusting letters (which almost never happens) I send the letter back 'return to sender' or extremely unacceptable mail (such as fascist manifests or menace-messages) I collect it in black shut envelopes as 'poison to be careful with'. Sometimes I show mail in the window on the street-side at my home, so that my neighbours and those who, walking or cycling, are passing by, can have a look and read the story from 'someone of this time and planet'. With intimate letters, such as love-letters I am very respectful and will never 'spread' these into the Network.

In fact the principal Temple Post Archive is not the materials that I have in here, but the copies or originals from received mail that I all or not multiplied, distributed again into the Network.

The Archive can't be more than a kind of a dusty shady lovers room, after the lovers went away, both back on their own personal path through the labyrinth.

The idea of 'Archived Mail Art' makes me melancholic and sad.

Often my wife and children say that I am living in a paper world. They are right. Often I am isolated with boxes, lists, date-stamps, photographs, stories, small or bigger art-works, audio cassettes, video cassettes (I have no player nor monitor!), and even CD-ROMs (I have no PC that can read CD-ROMs ; see my reaction on Guy Bleus' sending of the beautiful Artistamp CD-ROM), and I wish I could send

myself away in an envelope to be able to spend the night with M.A. princesses or start just one more utopian post dAdA-, post Fluxus-, post-Post revolution with all those beautiful peace and freedom loving senders of the papers and other materials that are the building stones and the dust of the "The Temple" -chaotic Archive.

My actions as an artist, in M.A., in poetry, in performance, in photography, and in the daily life, are all about freedom of sexuality and human relationships, the astounding beauty of nature and the human body, justice in society construction and guidance, brotherhood in food and energy spreading and freedom of speech. My house is full of boxes, full of mail, talking about hope, about revolution, about internationalism, about sexuality, about the construction of a global world, open world, no frontiers world, no selection world, not for sale world, but sometimes I think that at the end I will just be a fool on a mountain of dreams, dissolved frustrations and loneliness. The god of art is the god of loneliness. Also in M.A. my archive is not a solution for my solitude. Nor for the one of the sender. We're all ones in the crowd. That's beautiful. So The Archive is not of principal importance. It is only the memory of a future wonderful past: The Temple in The Actual Time and Actual Global Situation.

Enclosed some photo's of The Temple situation beginning of September 1996.

While working on this answer I heard the news about Afghanistan. As young man in the late sixties, I was told

that god was love. Now I hear that god is oil/energy and that the holy places are where the pipelines must be controlled. I'm sure that in the next century god will be information. So free exchange will be more and more difficult. Be careful for the coming god. Don't trust the preachers. Keep your eyes and ears wide open. Stay in touch with individuals, don't accept 'the voices of those who pretend to speak for the people'.

RJ : Could you explain more precise what you mean with: "don't accept 'the voices of those who pretend to speak for the people". Who are these "preachers"?

Reply on 20-11-1996

JvdB: Dear Ruud, The answer to your question I gave years ago to Moniek Darge from Studio Logos in Gent (Belgium), but I can't find the text right now. Consider this card as my reply.

(On the other side of the card there was an article with the text "Nuclear Power Lobby boycotts research on the development of cheap solar cells.")

RJ : I thought you meant 'preachers' inside the mail art network, but now I understand you speak of preachers in our society. For some mail artists the mail art network is a lot of 'fun and games', but for you it seems to be a reaction to the current world we live in. Does (or did) mail art change the world? (A difficult question, I know, but I am curious about your answer).

next answer on 18-1-1997

(José sent me his answer twice. Due to the large amount of mail I got, and the travels abroad, I only was able to retype his long answer in June 1997, and this was the time I sent him the next question)

JvdB: Dear Ruud, I received your reaction (next question) on my preceding #1 on 2 December 1996. Now on 18 January 1997 I finally find some time to answer. Meanwhile I made a trip to Artpool (where I found after sending two letters to announce my arrival only a closed door and a telephone answering-machine) and to Vincze Laszlo M.A. participant living at Tâigu-Mures, Transylvania, North of Romania (Where me and Electric Mirei were welcomed as friends and enjoyed a wonderful hospitality.)

My answer to the question if mail art change(d) the world is: YES. But behind this simple word we must see a whole complex of hopes and disillusion. I know many creative people who begin to participate to the Network with a lot of engagement, to stop a few years later, disappointed about the results of their efforts. I think that particular mail art, especially because of its statement 'Not for sale' is 'Art Inutile'. In this society it is very difficult to continue spending time and money on activities that don't give you any financial feed-back. And because of the Art Of Loneliness (Mail art is isolating you at your desk, at the copymachine, at your Pc-screen) you will also don't enjoy much physical company of all those you call 'dear friends' (you will never meet most of the people you are

networking with, and when you'll meet them the contact will be fast, loaded with exchange-passions, and for every 'Personal Contact' manifestation you will need a real guerilla-attitude to find the time and money to do M.A. Tourism.) I understand those who say that M.A. is just a faked impossible dream.

But it changed the world because it did something that never happened before: Via the evolutions coming from Dada and Fluxus and via the art historical fact of Ray Johnson's New York School of Correspondence a strange thing happened from within the world of artists: Doors were opened for a huge quantity of people who are not familiar with the art-scene. Within the meaning of the magic words 'No Jury' a boiling chaos of exchanges between artists and non-artists, southern and northern people, fools and intellectuals, started living as A Thing Nobody Could Orchestrate. The consequence is that all of us receive often a lot of bullshit-papers, obsessional messages, and so on: Mail art is rubbish, dust, noise, materialized absurdity, hope against all misery and hypocrisy! Dada was everything that was not before. Mail art is Nothing New. Nobody-Art. Anonymous fame. Nothing of Any Value.

There are only two reasons to continue Mail art: -1- Because one is an adept of receiving/sending out communication Signs (MAIL-art). -2- To maintain contact from Artist to Artist (mail-ART). I don't believe that mail art is able to have an influence on other fields than those belonging to these two activities.

Mail-art didn't change the world outside the mail art circuit as art in general didn't change the world in general. Only if art can penetrate into society it is able to change the world. Often we see that 'dangerous' art phenomenon's such as the Berlin Dada-movement had the potency to change the world but because of this it was pointed as a kind of political-criminality (artists can get arrested because their work/actions have an influence on society evolution). I believe that Mail art and E-mail exists thanks to institutions such as the National Postal Services and the PC hard- & soft-ware business. Networking is not a creation from the artists, but an economical development within the concept Mail art Network is playing its game.

Mail-art as activity is equal to all arts: It uses certain possibilities to Play. The meaning of the idea of "Playing" is a dissident thing into society of "exploitation" with mainly financial goals. The difference between The Play of the classical fine arts and Mail-art is that mail-art also plays with its own value: Mail-art works have no value (it is Not For Sale.) So many people doing Not for Sale activities within the idea of L'Art inutile is the principle changing I can see. But it will lead to the same nothing as all Arts: The wonderful Nobody Nowhere World of poetry and nonsense's. every try to make catalogues, exhibitions, public manifestations, publications, readings, etc.... is a try to survive the self-destruction of Mail-art. But the self-destruction of Mail-art seen as 'Art for a certain person' or 'Art from a certain period' is irreversible. No-one will ever be able to point out 'The end of Mail-art'. Mail-art will dissolve into the 21st century of communication

possibilities and business. It seems to be impossible for me to say that Mail-art doesn't exist and never existed.

Art is or business or destruction. Mail-art is part of what Duchamp called 'The Artist Of Tomorrow Will Go Underground'. Excepts certain exceptions, such as the action to liberate Clemente Padin from jail in the seventies (or was it another decenia?) , Mail-art and all networking is just a try to play with possibilities such as mail-traffic, fax-machines, computer networks. But seen from the inside I think that Mail-art exchange/networking changed many of the visions on living within a certain society and within the so-called 'global village' of the enormous amount of networker-individuals. As well the networker is an invisible person as his 'art-work' stays hidden for the outsiders. The networking idea is situated into a philosophy as expressed by Foucault (also expressed by Warhol : everybody can be famous for a few seconds) : This time has no longer centers of power and famous people, all individuals are a small center of power on themselves. Into the more commercial level we see how 'stars' become famous very fast and 'disappear' a few years later with the same speed as a kind of 'out of use' products. We see the same in politics. We see the same into Mail-art where participants lose their possibilities to send out mail (Only Senders Can Be Located.) Everybody seems to be reduced by the media into 'a temporary exploitable hero'. Mail-art started in the heart of this 'media' phenomenon. Good mail-art networking is when mail artists can find personal and evolving solutions for this 21st century monster of 'communication'. The networker is closer to the original idea of dada than to 'someone who will change the world'.

For many networkers the networking is a personal statement for personal use. Many of us don't believe in rose gardens. We know that we don't have the power. We exist and we try to maintain a kind of existence we regard as senseful. That's why we spend time and money. I know that some do it 'to change'. But mostly they are focussed on the art institutions, such as galleries, museums, publications, etc..... but they are only 'the artists' into the net. Besides them there are an enormous quantity of people participating without having any other goal than 'to change' their own circumstances as individual towards 'certain others' and to 'maintain' this New Activity. This 'persistence' is often directed more towards 'the one on the other side' than towards 'the personal profit'.

Mail-art and networking changes the world of every participant, but I don't think it is able to change 'the world' . For those who want to promote political, ecological, etc.... activities I think that it is better to use other channels such as Greenpeace, Amnesty International and all organized political, ecological, etc.... action-groups. Here I want to remind Clemente Padin's famous words: 'M.A. isn't sufficient.'

Other Networkers build up an archive of interesting and often quality art works. During my visit at Vincze Laszlo in Târgu-Mures Transylvania I saw how the 'Ex-Libris' - makers (lino-cut on small format) have their own net for exchange their experiences and artworks. A main part of internet is about exchange of sex-themes. So we can't say that communication/exchange networks are a creation of the Mail-artists. But in the seventies and the eighties the

Mail-art network became a phenomenon that grew above all other networks, especially within the sub-culture of people who are interested into personal expression such as artists and creative people in general. Mail-art opened doors that were never open before.

A second answer to your question is about how mail-art changed my life. It gave me the enormous treasure of being in touch with so many people I couldn't ever be in touch with without the network. But maybe instead of the Ray Johnson NY School of Correspondence / Fluxus / Ben Vautier / etc.... histories, a net of pure correspondence could have given me all the personal information and tourism possibilities I enjoyed. While I was very active into the mail-art network I got more and more isolated from the world around me, such as my family and my local society. Because Mail-art wasn't able to change the world which is the world of daily lies, media manipulation and development of norms which are often creating a system of exclusion. Due to the information and the contacts within the mail-art network I could read, hear, meet people and their messages who gave me a place into the chaos reality is. I lost my place into the fake world and became a clown in love with so many personalities that I call some of them 'my dearest friend' or 'O my lover lover lover.' Although I'll never be able to meet them and build the society we all perceive in our dreams. Mail-artists aren't The New Power (black or white, fuck it) but The Invisible Dissidents Of The Dealy Exploitation Of All Creativity And Artistry. Beginning this century Dada was the best soap available. The last half of the Xxth century is washed by Mail-art. Thanks to it I could often clean away the omnipresent shit

of this Big Monster (Communication Systems) Era within which honesty is measured into degrades of lying and almost all water became undrinkable.

But because of Mail-art I became a double dissident: The first part of the expression: Mail (no jury / all that can be send by mail...) made me a dissident to the Art-institutes (no financial nor other support for exhibitions, travelling, no publications by any local nor governmental cultural organization.) The second part: art, made me a dissident to the establishment (all real artists are criticizing the establishment of society). So after 16 years of Mail-art activity very little is left. I lost more than I gained. It is almost time to leave. That's why I feel the importance to answer your question as clear as possible. I do it now. For this TAM-interview project that I regard as Something Interesting. I'll never do it again.

On your question if Mail-art changed the world I can easily answer: NO it didn't.

It will be funny to have been part of this indefinable movement that wasn't able to change anything but its own participants. And I'll be very sad when it will be The End. ('Cause the media is the message , Life is art, Merz for ever').

RJ : In your long answer you tell also a little about your travels to other mail-artists. Sometimes your trips bring you to quite isolated places where there are mail-artists who aren't always able to send out mail. Why this choice?

next answer on 5-9-1998

(because of a break I took the answer was only retyped in April 1998, and the interview was continued. José wrote in his last letter besides the answer that he hasn't that much time to continue the interview, so after his long answer I will only ask one more question.....)

JvdB: In the expression 'Mail-Art' we have two words. The double synthetic idea. The second part 'Art' is about a new kind of art that is build on collectivity and co-operating. This can easily be done without personal contact. Often the distance and the mystery of the other one on the other side of the sender-receiver playground is a main element of the desire to send and joy to receive, the mail-art exchange. Mail-art without personal contact is mysterious, erotic.

The first word 'Mail' is about the constant creation of an undependent alternative system/network for global village info exchange. The more we can do this mail (exchange or information & art), by direct personal contact, the more its goal: the global village construction, is approximated. So the ultimate communication is the personal meeting.

On artistic level this can be practiced by doing occasional co-art-actions that might be public or not, and by doing occasional congress mail-art (by snail-mail), by fax or telephone, by e-mail.) On the social level it can be practiced into love- and friendship-relation building (emotional/sexual and social solidarity) and particular into

being guided within the social reality of the visited inviting mail-art partner (experiencing the local circumstances, the home town, the friends & family, the specific possibilities and limits.) Seeing this reality can lead to a brutal demystification of the image of the "never met before mail-art partner-companion". For me this means not a devaluation of the person of my mail-art partner, but to a better mix of mystery & reality. In mail-art , more than in the traditional arts, reality is the art. Art = all realities and imagination in interaction with each other. Australian aboriginals say the 'art' is to know what is going on' (this in trans-chronological and in transcendental sense). The idea of the personal meeting is, in my opinion, accurately described in the publication 'Radio Sermonettes' about 'Immediatism' , Liberian Book Club, New York 1992, which was only recently reaching me, here at The Temple in the south-west of the Flanders Belgium Europe anno '97 a.s.o.

The power of the personal meeting is based on a mutual personal curiosity into the other one and into the particular togetherness of certain personalities who are meeting at certain places and moments. Without this mutual curiosity the meeting will be hypocrite and worthless, just a show (as we see in many art-events.) When the personal meeting happens, I call it: The Temple.

In the usual exchange (mail-art, fax, e-mail) there are 3 main distances to cross: the geographical, the physical (the impossibility of the pleasure of sensorial observation and influencing), and the individual/cultural. At Temples of Personal Meeting 2 of these distances are resolved: I am at the same place and time as my partner and I can see,

observe, hear, smell, maybe touch him/her. Only the individual/cultural distance stays as a provocation for creativity and possible source of frustration.

To return from here to your original question I must emphasize on the fact that for Isolated Artists (those we are interested in and passionate to mail-art participation, but who are forced by circumstances such as lack of organization or lack of money, not any longer able to send out ideas, images, sounds, desires, invitations, answers, participation's, provocation's, advises, greetings) only the personal meeting with the other (more rich, more luxurious) partner, gives the opportunity 'to exchange'. I visited Vincze Laszlo end 1996 /beginning 1997 because it was the only chance to know what was/is his actual life as man, father, ex-libris artist and mail-artist. I felt very sorry to be not able to travel to Belgrade during the period of the Cultural Embargo. Many of us are dreaming of a visit to Rea Nikonova and Serge Segay at Eysk. Often we are obliged to stay at home while we feel 'where it's at' and to join on another moment at another place.

During two journeys I experienced the same conflict between the 'Art'-idea and the 'Mail'-idea:

First I went to Romania, in the spring after the X-mas revolution. At the airport Dan and Amalia Perjovski were waiting for us. They had been very active in mail-art during the Ceausescu repression and stood at the door of new institutions to be accepted as 'Romanian Temporary Artists'. Besides this meeting I also met more working class

hero mail-artists such as the brothers Vincze, Marosan and Pungucz Karoly.

When I went to St. Petersburg I met the artists couple Paul & Helen Veshev, members of the Raft Art Group (in that period visited by the Shozo Shimamoto Netrun Group), and also the mail-art correspondent and police-officer Eugene Shashkin. In both cases of mail-art tourism the artists had the freedom and the luxury of many connections, as familiar to the situation of 'artists', and guided us very heartfelt towards all places they wanted us to see: Their ateliers and the cultural and art-historical attractions from their locations and the reference of their artistic activities to all this. The more 'amateuristic' (please Networkers, all of you who read this interview, don't shoot at me, the pianist) or do I better say: the 'not for sale partners', showed me 'the right stuff' (the survival of the individual and his friends/family, with their personal aims and necessities, within the own circumstances.)

In both cases of visiting, after the visit, 'the artists' didn't contact me even once again. We left at the airport, shook hands, embraced, had a good time behind, made indistinct appointments for the future and me and my family crossed the 'only passengers' border and left. That was the end. No more communication. No explanation. The radical elimination of exchange. In both cases the others, the 'non' official artists' stayed in touch with me. The reason for this is that their desires for exchange were in harmony with mine, which are about the practical foundation of the global village. This while the 'artists' only had the expectation of the foundation of a network for the

promotion and distribution (selling) of their personal art production. These aims, which I respect, are foreign to my personal situation as mail-art networker.

Of course the mail-art network has its limits: to continue it needs the non-isolated partners (Only Senders Can Be Located). But I believe that an essential task of the enormous mail-art network is, also, to be able to 'take in tow' Isolated Artists. The Isolated Artists are the living provocation to practice the Mail-Art rule: "No selection / Open for all." Isolation is a growing reality, To break it is our new utopian desire. (Of course we will lose, but we don't accept this: We are here to found Paradise for ourselves and for all.)

I am not able to travel much (lack of social freedom, lack of money). So I must do other things:

1 - Functioning as a transmit zone :

- Sending Art ne Rat mail from Croatia to Serbia and Bosnia and vice versa.
- Multiplying and distributing Dobrica Kamperelic's Open World magazine (sometimes also other mags.)
- Distributing some personal messages from Isolated Artists as Temple Post Worldnews flyers. (I am very grateful if Internet connected networkers put these messages on Internet).

2 - Creating non José Vandenbroucke participation's to M.A. projects, with the materials from Isolated Artists in the Temple Archive, so that the Mail-Art from artists who

have no possibilities to participate arrive before the deadline at the address of the project, in an envelope that has as sender the address of the Isolated Artist and not the one from the physical sender, The Temple. So it is possible to find participation from Romanian or other mail-artists that are sent from Belgium. In mail-art all is possible, even the impossible! dAdA! The intention is that the art of the Isolated Artist is shown in the project and that the participating Isolated Artist will receive the catalogue. (Sometimes I don't participate myself, so that the Isolated Artist will receive more useful information than I do).

Mail-Art is about exchange of information. To be isolated is to be not able to exchange. All networkers must face this problem as something to work on. Mail-Art isn't sufficient.

Together with this answer I'll send you a message from Segay, as recently received (please put it as an illustration into the Interview Booklet / if possible) , a photo of me and Mirei at Ludwig Forum Museum Aachen, where we pose in front of a big work from Dan Perjovski at the exhibition 'Romanian Art After Ceaucescu' (no reference to and visits from Mail-Art partners between 1981 and now).

I also must ask you to 'finish' this Interview (only one or two more questions) because it takes me a lot of time and forces to formulate the right answer to your interesting questions, as I want to do this with the quality I want to offer to your very respectful and historical Interview Project

(the next question was sent after a break of over a year on January 16th 1999 and is also the last question for the interview)

RJ : After a long break I think it is time we let others read your words as well José. It seemed you needed always a lot of words to answer my questions. Sorry for the small break, but as promised eventually all interviews will be published. The last & traditional question is always: Did I maybe forget to ask you something?

next answer on 26-06-1999

JvdB: Dear Ruud, I can't imagine what you forgot to ask. I received your Interview-mail on 3.3.1999. So almost 3 months ago. This after I almost attacked you because of your long delay in answering me. Mea Culpa Great Administrator. But there was a war. There is a war. At the Balkans and on so many places on our actual media-manipulated planet Earth, and into the heart of what we so dearly call "Communication Art." Communication is more than ever a product. A subject of economical and socio-political value. Many sensitive people return to an intimate production of personal art. Fin de sciecle panic? Tiredness? Survival necessity?

It is a fact that the M.A. Network didn't succeed in creating an independent network that could be a practical aid for the survival of the free communication for all. The dream is over. Many former M.A. are more isolated than ever. We, the rich Europeans, have no tools to keep them involved into the magma of messages. Meanwhile the conflict

between the idea of "quantity" versus "quality" became less funny, more dramatic. Daily I have a series of names into my head to whom I want to send something. But I can't decide to send a folded copied and over-copied A4 with my Temple - Post logo stamped on it, just to show I'm still alive. As long as there's nothing sensefull to say I feel forced to wait. Maybe I'm just tired of seeing that poetry can't rule the world.

I want to end this interview by sending my expression of thanks to the huge work your Interview Project is, a work which value will grow in future. It is, besides Robin Crozier's History Memory Malaise sendings and Ryosuke Cohen's Brain Cell sendings a window on the enormous activity that was and still is developed by the many former, actual and future networkers, grouped under the magic phenomenon-name: Mail-Art. And by sending my dearest regards to all who will read it. I have no truth nor authority to say: "This was Mail-Art" (Wilfried Nold published in Numero 4, 1998 , my letter about continuos Death and Rebirth of the Mail-Art Network), nor to say "This is Mail-Art. I leave it all to you. Good Luck.

RJ : Thanks for the interview José!

MARK BLOCH

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH MARK BLOCH (USA)

Started on: 12-02-1995

Ruud Janssen : Welcome to this mail-interview. First let me ask you the traditional question. When did you get involved in the mail-art network?

Reply on: 25-02-95 (internet)

Mark Bloch: I first did mail art in 1968 when I did a postage stamp of a kid in my 6th grade class who used to scream a lot. He had some sort of personality disorder and as a 12 year old, I bought this was very amusing so I immortalized him with a stamp. I first used rubber stamps of Popeye, the cartoon character when I was 5 years old or so. My first use of the mail for artistic use as an "adult" was around 1976-1977 when I bought some used rubber stamps from a little shop in Kent Ohio where I was in college. They had belonged to the members of DEVO, I think.

I began to send mail art to people on postcards without knowing what mail art was. I water colored and drew on the cards, too. I became interested in rubberstamps that way. That led me to The Rubber Stamp Album by 2 women. I think one of them was named Joni Miller but I'm

not sure. Maybe one was named Lowry? Anyway, that book had an article about mail art in it. I realized that I was not the only one doing it. I got Ed Higgins' address out of it and sent him some mail art. That was after I had graduated college and had moved to California. 1978. Also at this time, I came across a little poster for a mail art show stapled to a tree with Bill Gaglione's address on it. I sent him something. The Poster was put there by the Westside Agent Michael Mollett, a mailartist from LA who later became a friend.

All of this happened around the same time. I also saw the work of Ray Johnson in that Rubber Stamp Album for the first time. It made an impression on me (no pun intended). But I didn't know I could write to Ray myself. So I didn't start with him until 1980 or so. Ed Higgins also started me with Ed Golik Golikov, a early member of the New York Correspondence School living in Denver Colorado. I also saw a big rubber stamp art exhibition by Stephen Vincent Benes in Santa Monica California. Come to think of it, I think that is where I heard about the Rubber Stamp Album. Yeah, I went to the show because I was using stamps and I saw a mention in a newspaper, when I visited the gallery I heard about the book and from the book I heard about mail art.

By late 78 I decided to make my activities official. I contacted my friend Kim Kristensen in Ohio, back where I used to live, and asked him if he wanted to be PAN Midwest. He said OK. Michael Heaton, another guy I had been sending art to through the mail after my graduation

from college moved to New York and he became PAN East. I lived in Laguna Beach California and became PAN West.

Within a year I was in touch with people all over the world. Shozo Shimamoto and Ryosuke Cohen sent some of their first mail art at that time to me. I also received things from Booster Clevellini who was actually Buster Cleveland but at the time I got him and Cavellini mixed up so I couldn't understand what all the hype was about when Cavellini made his first US visit in 1980 for Interdada 80.

Anyway, after Cavellini's visit I became very much involved with mail art. Seeing some of the people in person, including my earliest correspondent EF Higgins, helped me to understand the network. I began to use the name PAN myself and my friends in Ohio and New York continued to be correspondents but by then ceased using the PAN name. POSTAL ART NETWORK was what Pan stood for, but soon it became clear that the bigger postal art network was something I should participate in and using the name PAN for myself was more interesting, just as Higgins used Doo Dah and Gaglione used Dadaland. So that is how I became Pan. A few years later I started to notice similarities between myself and the Greek goat god Pan but that is another story.

RJ : How did things develop after you started with mail-art and meeting mail- artists. How did you get involved in the communication with the use of computers?

Reply on : 11-3-95 (internet)

MB : Things developed rapidly. I was very inspired by the Inter-dada 80 festival. I met Cavellini for the first time. Also Buster Cleveland, Ed Higgins, as I said above, as well as Bill Gaglione and other "2nd generation" mail artists. I also had the pleasure of meeting Al Hansen (Hansen died shortly after Mark Bloch wrote this - ed.) , who is a very important art historical figure who has avoided the spotlight due to his extreme views of the art marketplace. Those very views are what attracted me to him in the first place. I knew immediately I was dealing with "the genuine article." He was in John Cage's composition class at the New School with Dick Higgins and the other pre-fluxists and was an important contributor to the first happenings. In fact, he was doing them before they were called that. So I sat spellbound as he and Cavellini drew portraits of each other in a Pasadena coffee house. I also joked around with him, asking him for his autograph on a very tiny piece of paper. He wrote "Alan Kaprow" folded it up and handed it back to me. I was amazed that I could interact with a person like Hansen who was a legend to me.

I realized then that the mail art network would allow me to collaborate with people of Hansen's stature if I wanted to. I was also very impressed with the other mail artists and the spirit of dada that engulfed the various events I attended. I recall Josine Starrells Janko, the daughter of dada Marcel Janko, gave a lecture at the Venice (California) jail. She said the mail artists were not as dada as her father's generation of dada and she may have been right. But I didn't care. I was very happy to be dealing with people who KNEW about dada. Up until that point, I had only read about such things and was ridiculed and labeled a trouble maker when

I pursued such activity at college, before I had heard of mail art.

Now here were a whole lot of people who had studied dada as I had, who valued it's anarchistic spirit and were taking actions to promote it in a new context. I was thrilled.

I began to correspond with as many people as I could and tried to meet them if they were local. I was always interested in meeting people in a way that reflected the chaos and fun of mail art so I proposed bizarre ways of getting together with people. I met correspondents Jim Reva and Maia Norman at Laguna Beach with a theme of MEAT (meat equals meet.) I brought along an entourage of friends and kids and a giant cow with an actual cowhead locked in a paper mache' head. They were waiting for me at the designated time and place (1pm July 6, 1980) dressed as butchers with meat spread about them on the sidewalk. We have been friends ever since. A videotape was made of the event and its aftermath.

I also corresponded with a local guy called the LA Obscurist Club. Somehow we started corresponding about mice and then cat and mouse and finally I proposed a Cat And Mouse game to meet. He wouldn't do it but we did exchange some pretty wild objects at each others' doorsteps and through the mail. Eventually we met at a mail art show.

Those were the early days of mail art meetings for me, also with Jerry Dreva ; David Zack , who lived in LA then.

Eventually I met a lot of the people I corresponded with, using various degrees of fanfare. But I always enjoyed the experience of meeting people in person. Things changed drastically in 1982 when I moved from LA to New York. I saw a poster that said Cavellini was going to be in New York. I called the number and ended up speaking on the phone to Buster Cleveland. He said I could perform at the gig. So I was part of a bill that included many of the people I had been corresponding with. One of them was Carlo Pittore. I will never forget our initial meeting, he was yelling to me from the bottom of a stairwell and his big smile and warm greetings were like a Welcome Home to the network. I experienced comraderie from that point on that did not exist in the LA mail art community. Or at least I did not feel a part of it.

Carlo introduced me to John Evans, John Jacob, Ray Johnson, Steve Random, Jean Brown, Zona (Bernard Banville) and many other mail artists. Foreigners came to visit like Arno Arts, Jürgen Olbrich, HR Fricker, Henryk Gajewsky, Sonja Van Der Burg, Günther Ruch. We had all sorts of parties and events for each of them. I always made a special point of having a one-to-one face-to-face meeting with people at least once. I value those collaborative meetings a great deal. It began to seem obvious at that time that the future of mail art was going to be in those meetings. I began a series of interviews with mail artists myself at that time -around 83- for The Last Mail Art Show. I felt that contact between those of us in the network was very important. I knew then what were later formalized in Tourism and in the onslaught of mail art writings that followed.

As for computers, I knew that was an eventuality, too. In the first edition of PANMAG (Panmag Number 1, there had been two others before it- Panmags 391 and 451. And there was also a Number 2 of 391 making it even more confusing. But anyway...) I made a sticker that said that the next logical step for mail art was computers- "But who ever said mail artists were logical?" I'm not sure of the exact date of that sticker but it was the first time computers were mentioned in mail art, to my knowledge.

Anyway, such things are not important because someone else always did something "first." But the point is that I was very interested in computers from the start. I should have mentioned that the stickers I made were done with a computer.

In 1977, around the time I started with rubber stamps, I made my first work of computer art. It wasn't made with a computer at all. It was a canvas with all sorts of information about computers collaged on it, including a portrait of me made by a computer. The type of thing you could have made at a shopping mall at that time for a very high price. I couldn't resist having one made of my image and cutting it out for collages.

Actually I forgot to mention that I also used that same image to advertise a show I was having at my college. It was called 11-7-77 to 11-11-77. I stenciled those dates onto the computer image and stuck it everywhere on the Kent State University campus. My name did not appear, just

numbers. Oh yes, I also used my social security number for my name.

So yes, I was very much interested in computers from before I ever heard of mail art. I took a class in FORTRAN in 1975. I wish I had stuck with it because now I wish I were a programmer.

In the mid eighties I used a graphic computer to create drawings of me as Pan. I also used a different computer to make random lines on a piece of vellum by attaching a pen to a moving computerized table.

In 1990, after a brief experiment with the WELL in California, I started Panscan on the Echo Teleconferencing BBS. Panscan was a link between the Internet and the mail art net. Unfortunately not enough mail artists had computers then so it took a new direction, away from mail art. We did things like create a collaborative poem or tell stories about how we got our taste or discussed the Art Strike and The Word Strike or talk about Dada and Duchamp as well as mail art.

Now (1995) more mail artists have computers so I am hoping I can continue with my original plan of a more concrete link between the two media. Also I should mention that a few mail artists did access Panscan once or twice- Charles Francois, Guy Bleus, CrackerJack Kid- and many others saw it on their visits to New York- John Held and Xexoxial Endarchy and Mark Pawson.

I think the future for mail art and computers is bright. Especially now that I am in the process of creating a PANSCAN HOME PAGE on the World Wide Web.

RJ : In the time you were doing the Panscan I was experimenting with the digital TAM-Bulletin (as a BBS-service). It seems the time wasn't right then as you mentioned. Also the costs for data-communication was then a problem. Now, in 1995, the sending of this question to you by E-mail via INTERNET costs me half the price a normal envelope with the question would cost.... But the difference is that I send you the question in digital form. Just ASCII, and no color, no smell, no touch of my hand that you can trace. Is the electronic communication ready for artists?

Reply on : 18-03-1995

MB : You say just ASCII, and no color, no smell, no touch of my hand that you can trace. Is the electronic communication ready for artists?

I say- YES YES YES. I think you have given a good case in favor of it with your question. The electronic communication IS ready because there is no color, no smell, no handprints! The Internet needs artists!

Most of the home pages I've seen are pretty lame. There is very little inspired work going on. In fact, in ALL spheres of influence on our planet there is very little inspired work going on- not just Internet or World Wide Web but also in the Art Market and in the political arena and in the

business arena and YOU NAME IT. The world needs artists!

The business world is perhaps the MOST creative area of human endeavor right now. Isn't that ironic? They have come up with the most creative solutions in the computer area and even in the problem of what to do about Eastern Europe. The businessmen lead the way (after the mail artists, of course, we were there first, as usual). Sure they fuck stuff up too, but I look at the planet and what it needs and it needs so much and I see a big gap that artists need to fill. So yes, the answer is YES. There IS room for artists on the Net, it is imperative.

You spoke of ASCII. I pride myself on the fact that I use ASCII in my work. I am only now -in 1995- getting a high speed modem. Up until now -for 7 years- I have used a 1200 baud modem. I like that! It is cheap and easy to use- not just for rich people in the USA but for anyone anywhere. A cheap computer and a modem can be pretty inexpensive. The phone bills are another problem but if we are clever we can also overcome that obstacle too.

I prefer ASCII, very low tech computer communications. Why? Because then we have to rely on the written word. That requires a person goes into their INTERNAL network of experiences and feelings and thoughts and COMMUNICATE through the written word. I like that.

I am working on an autobiographical novel. It contains no pictures. But with 184,020 words I have communicated most of what has happened to me and how I feel about it

fits in a 1052 kilobyte file. I can put it on a floppy disc and send it to you or just include it in this letter and e mail it to you. You'll read all about the colors and smells and experiences that are my life in great detail.

I have never believed that being an artist meant being a visual artist. Though I also see opportunities for visual artists in computers.

RJ : One of the things I find difficult with the electronic communication is the archiving-part. My mail from the P.O.Box I can put in boxes, but somehow archiving the text-files and the graphic files is more difficult because it is connected to the changing hardware and software as well. How do you archive your mail-art? (both the snail as the electronic mail)

Reply on : 25-03-95 (INTERNET)

MB : Well, now you've hit on something interesting because my archive is completely unmanageable! The hard mail (snail mail) used to be organized - I think it was completely perfect for 15 minutes in 1985 or so- but now it is EVERYWHERE and completely UNorganized. I actually paid a guy to come in and work on it with me in the mid-eighties and that is when things got good. I set up a system and he implemented it.

Everything was separated by size. There was basically the postcards, the letter size envelopes, the larger envelopes and the big envelopes and then the packages, I believe. Within those categories it was set up according to countries

and states (for the US) and then within those categories alphabetical by person's name. Not their real name but the one they used. That system worked ok for a while and I plan to put everything in that order eventually but for 10 years it has just piled up chronologically in cardboard boxes.

Especially the past 6 years I have been on Word Strike and Ex Post Facto, Retroactive Art Strike and so I haven't answered but 5 or 6 pieces of mail in all that time. So all the mail goes into piles by WHEN it was reviewed. To be answered and sorted later. Of course I will probably never answer most of it. But I would like to. I still receive a lot of mail, believe it or not, and I am thankful for it.

So mostly we are talking about a big file cabinet filled with organized mail art, some boxes filled with organized mail art. There are also 4 big boxes that I call the Last Mail Art Show. They contain pieces I selected in 1984 that I wanted to use for the catalogue to my show of that name (that never got made.)

The rest is just chaos.

Also- I made an agreement to give whatever I don't want to the Kent State University Special Collections Library in Ohio, where I went to college. They have a very nice collection of all kinds of manuscripts there and I am honored that they want to preserve any mail art I want to give them.

They also have the collection of a New York mail artist named Tom Wirth who died a few years ago. Tom was a member of the New York Correspondence School with Ray Johnson in the 60s. His collection of correspondence ended up in Kent which is wonderful because between his archive and mine, they have a very thorough collection mail art from the early 60s thru to the present.

So I occasionally get it together to send them some boxes of mail art that I have looked through. I go through the boxes and pull out all postcards, which go into a huge box I have. (It used to be a box that a mail box was bought in!) I also pull out the artistamps. They go in a special place. So do the show catalogues and projects. Then I save any personal correspondence with friends or family. And anything I just happen to like. Those items go into the Pantheon and will be categorized as I mentioned above some day. The rest I send off to Kent.

I also have a huge pile of xeroxes over here. I make copies of almost anything hand made that I have ever sent out so it is quite a pile. Maybe 4 or 5 feet tall. I also keep copies of letters I wrote on my computer on disc.

That brings us to the electronic side of things. I have been saving everything electronically since I got my computer in 87 or so. It is all on floppy discs and organized in some general categories but generally, this is also chaos. It needs to be looked at.

I do have some organization. There are files called Letters To People and most of the letters are there. There are lists of

everything I ever sent out and to whom all in one folder. (also somewhere are similar lists scribbled down before I ever got the computer). Then there is Echo. Ever since 1990 when I got on Echo, the BBS I use and where my Panscan is located, I have saved every piece of e mail I ever got. It is in hundreds of files downloaded into my computer. It is a mess. Perhaps a PANDora's box I will never open. I don't really care anymore but it may come in handy some day so I save them. Space is cheap on disc. I also have archives of things I've written on Echo's other conferences. Stuff about philosophy, love, being a man, psychology, culture, tv, movies etc. I save those and would like to use them some day to make a book or something.

All of it is semi-organized. None of it is organized to my satisfaction. I wish I had a lot of space and a lot of time and a lot of money

RJ : Well, time. In Computerland everything goes fast. Diskettes grow old and get useless (magnetic information doesn't lasts that long), the messages on INTERNET get distorted and aren't always as they originally were planned (The messages as you send them to me are accompanied by lots of strange and wonderful computer-poetry, but I select the ASCII I need for the interview only). The Gigabytes of info I myself have on diskettes will be useless if I don't make backups every few years and keep all the hardware I need for it. I am a bit pessimistic about archiving all the electronic information and therefore still prefer that paper. Electronic information for me is like electricity. It is useful, and it transforms in many forms. Guy Bleus has started his

Electronic Archive. How should such an Electronic Archive look like?

Reply on : 8-4-1995 (internet)

MB : It should look like this

(This is the complete file as it came in via internet. I only adjusted the layout a bit)

PANSCAN

- Item 1 (127) Ground Rules For Panscan (YOU MUST READ THIS)
- Item 2 (67) What is Panscan?
- Item 12 (50) Ideas for New Projects We Can Do On Panscan To Make Life more exciting.
- Item 121 (127) Post-Art Events, Panscan Events, Best Laid Plans, etc. PAN-Cal
- Item 308 (178) Panscan: The Eulogy, The Funeral, & The Vigil
- Item 345 (50) The Golden Age of Panscan: Memory or Myth?
- Item 354 (49) Panscan Pride: The Few, The Proud, The Bold
- Item 355 (60) Panscan Improvement Item
- Item 336 (227) Panman apology item
- Item 339 (70) Fall 1992 Postal Art Event

MAIL ART, MAIL, SELF-PUBLISHING

- Item 4 (135) Postal Art History

- Item 5 (156) HOW TO Item
- Item 8 (172) The Art Strike
- Item 9 (247) The Meaning of the Word ART Join
the Word Strike 1991-1993
- Item 18 (48) Japanese Mail Artists Network Run
Across Europe
- Item 27 (22) Panscan Express: WISH YOU WERE
HERE
- Item 40 (75) CAVELLINI 1914-2014
- Item 41 (132) Self-Publishing and the Sub-Modern
tradition
- Item 42 (41) Pan Pals In Eastern Europe
- Item 55 (109) RubberRubberRubber-
RubberRubberRubber
- Item 95 (82) Chain Letters
- Item 102 (61) Postage Stamps / Artistamps
- Item 104 (68) (maga)ZINES (pronounced "zeens")
- Item 116 (24) Reflux Project
- Item 125 (6) 1992 Networker Congress
- Item 165 (2) Virgin Mail Artist
- Item 166 (1) INCH BY INCH : MAIL ART
PROJECT.
- Item 167 (1) EAST/WEST NET-LINK.
- Item 256 (250) The Junk Mail Tally
- Item 263 (4) YAWN the art strike magazine
- Item 269 (432) Elvis Gets a Stamp!
- Item 273 (150) FAX ART RESPONSE/March, 1992
- Item 321 (43) NC92 - Electronic Mail Art Event
- Item 322 (127) stuff I heard about Fact Sheet Five
- Item 347 (39) MORE Things I've Hears and Thought
about Factsheet Five!

ONGOING PROJECTS

- Item 6 (172) Discussion of Postal Art Shows and Projects (See also #13)
- Item 13 (11) Postal Art Shows and Projects List
- Item 15 (823) E Poem II
- Item 16 (38) Contribute to the Calendar
- Item 17 (57) Looking Glass
- Item 20 (148) Textual Art: found or created
- Item 24 (219) ASCII_ART
- Item 25 (935) The E Mail Poem- an on-line experiment

- Item 34 (120) TALES FROM ECONIA THE INTERACTIVE NOVEL

- Item 35 (101) ArtsWire
- Item 43 (30) VT-100 art
- Item 48 (78) Deranged Dictator Action Game
- Item 51 (67) Arithmetic
- Item 54 (45) Project with Kids
- Item 98 (106) Fascinating conversation
- Item 99 (199) Say Something *Dangerous*
- Item 100 (105) Top 100 Item
- Item 129 (465) Currency Event
- Item 141 (232) The analogue computer
- Item 142 (158) Remote Control Object Maker
- Item 143 (124) Virtual Theater!
- Item 144 (65) Palindromes
- Item 145 (29) Limericks
- Item 153 (43) Echo Exhibition
- Item 155 (90) Superzoom... an Echo collaboration
- Item 158 (161) Evolution vs. Deterioration: An Experiential Workshop

- Item 164 (14) Experimental Theatre
- Item 268 (487) Intersection of Scientific Ashrams
- Item 276 (204) Hyperpanscan Hypercard Hyperstack
- Item 288 (371) the name of the item is.....FUCK
CONFORMITY !!!!!
- Item 291 (21) Rapper's Delite!
- Item 317 (39) Poems on Paintings
- Item 350 (54) Midwinter Improvisation
- Item 352 (19) CA Agrippa - raw material, parodies,
commentary

ONE ITEM DISGUISED AS MANY

- Item 70 (1) Explanation of the next 19 items
- Item 71 (29) Monday
- Item 72 (19) Tuesday
- Item 73 (21) Wednesday
- Item 74 (21) Thursday
- Item 75 (30) Friday
- Item 76 (20) Saturday
- Item 77 (21) Sunday
- Item 78 (7) January
- Item 79 (6) February
- Item 80 (7) March
- Item 81 (6) April
- Item 82 (7) May
- Item 83 (7) June
- Item 84 (6) July
- Item 85 (7) August
- Item 86 (6) September
- Item 87 (6) October
- Item 88 (7) November

- Item 89 (8) December
Item 90 (58) Discussion of the last 19 items

HISTORICAL FIGURES

- Item 38 (78) Before Dada, Dada, Surrealism, After
Surrealism
Item 123 (81) Henry Miller and Anais Nin
Item 146 (36) Death and the Single Artist
Item 147 (86) Wittgenstein
Item 154 (56) Charlotte Moorman
Item 244 (601) Name Dropping
Item 338 (189) Dylan
Item 344 (117) DADA< DUCHAMP< CAGE<
FLUXUS

POST-ART THEORY

- Item 7 (151) Networking Theories
Item 57 (503) Artists and Suffering
Item 106 (220) Democracy
Item 108 (53) Technical Proficiency
Item 109 (412) Critique The Critics
Item 114 (361) Post-Modernism
Item 115 (367) Art and Terrorism
Item 117 (62) Concerning the Spiritual In Art
Item 122 (213) Gift giving (including letter writing)
Item 126 (51) Is the avant garde dead?
Item 127 (217) Design: Graphic, Industrial,
Experimental, Annoying
Item 136 (286) What is entertainment
Item 138 (86) Computer art, Thinking and Doing

- Item 139 (145) Gnawing, Nibbling, Biting, Chewing the Fat on Taste
- Item 157 (176) Post-post-modernism: Refreshing new thoughts from now people
- Item 163 (224) Death The Final Frontier
- Item 169 (300) Intellectual Property
- Item 248 (61) Taboos.
- Item 259 (332) Miss OB 1991's Narrative Item
- Item 289 (43) Playworld
- Item 323 (44) Hypertext/Hypermedia
- Item 335 (107) Cheesey vs, Campy
- Item 346 (85) CYBERcide
- Item 349 (41) Negativland and U2 and Copyright
- Item 353 (80) "Masterpieces"-- Pro and Con
- Item 362 (4) Patriotism

LANGUAGE

- Item 10 (158) Computers, On Line Communications, Mail Art, Language
- Item 26 (76) History and the Big Lie
- Item 28 (127) Pseudonyms, Impersonations, Fictional (?) Characters
- Item 160 (222) Language Is A Virus From Outer Space
- Item 168 (363) Amy B.'s Foucault Item
- Item 227 (210) The Museum of Annoying Slogans
- Item 231 (56) Word
- Item 267 (113) Childhood Textuality <tm> Voice
Literary Supplement

SENSES

- Item 53 (77) The Soundscape
- Item 212 (150) Sense of Smell
- Item 252 (10) Sense of Touch
- Item 258 (194) Impairments/ Disabilities
Questions/Discussion

PHILOSOPHY

- Item 66 (139) Life's Little Lessons
- Item 91 (187) The Water will Change to Cherry Wine
- Item 97 (234) Information Overload
- Item 151 (252) Pretty toenails: THE
ANTHROPOLOGY OF EVERYDAY
LIFE
- Item 156 (189) Your philosophy of life
- Item 170 (326) Philosophy and Nausea
- Item 254 (101) The Sine Wave Theory of Life
- Item 255 (49) Pet Philosophies
- Item 270 (212) Want to have a Philosophy Conference
on ECHO?
- Item 316 (19) thought for the day
- Item 327 (247) KARMA
- Item 328 (309) Truth or Consequences
- Item 334 (134) Mind Body Duality

SPIRITUALITY

- Item 150 (967) GOD: Defense Mechanism, Helpful
Construct, or Just a Close Personal
Friend
- Item 172 (19) Mysticism In Your Lifetime
- Item 257 (26) The Tao Te Ching -- The Way

- Item 271 (379) Son Of God
- Item 275 (195) I have been thinking about the difference between Christianity and Zen
- Item 274 (250) Epiphany
- Item 324 (162) Meditation
- Item 325 (194) Feng Shui - the art of placement
- Item 358 (40) Sex and Spirituality

POLITICS

- Item 33 (280) The NEA, the intolerant, freedom of speech and you
- Item 67 (247) People Without Addresses (The Homeless)
- Item 69 (200) CYBERPAN World Brain
- Item 93 (70) Utopia
- Item 94 (110) Dystopia
- Item 113 (502) Masturbation in the 21st Century
- Item 307 (150) Male feminists. Female sexists. Genderless politics??
- Item 310 (34) Depiction of Women on Television
- Item 311 (59) Depiction of Men on TV
- Item 341 (99) Your political orientation
- Item 351 (219) Multiculturalism
- Item 360 (44) Is homosexuality a culture? - "Sub item" from #351

SELF-HELL

- Item 52 (608) No Mask
- Item 96 (258) Famous Some Day

- Item 130 (140) ANGER
- Item 133 (101) Galleria of the Fractured Fragmentos
- Item 149 (247) Loneliness: Taboo
- Item 171 (48) why am i so serious?
- Item 173 (138) Your biggest fear
- Item 246 (42) Favorite Suffering
- Item 249 (177) narcissism -- or why i am the most important character in the world
- Item 261 (59) OBSESSion
- Item 264 (434) Success
- Item 280 (191) Responsibility
- Item 304 (220) Thin Skin Thick Skin
- Item 312 (250) Procrastination
- Item 313 (255) BOREDOM (yawn)
- Item 319 (71) Cleanliness, Neatness, Clutter and Filth

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

- Item 3 (976) Introductions
- Item 29 (359) I Hate Everything
- Item 30 (60) I am dancing at the feet of my lord all is bliss all is bliss
- Item 31 (986) Childhood Memories
- Item 32 (144) My Old Thoughts
- Item 37 (83) Not Quite and The Job That Got Away
- Item 50 (235) Safe and restful sleep sleep sleep
- Item 62 (211) Most Memorable Happening In Your Life
- Item 101 (70) REUNIONS
- Item 105 (231) Nicknames and How They Got That Way

- Item 118 (295) Did your parents destroy your life?
- Item 131 (389) Book(s) I bought today
- Item 162 (172) Home
- Item 243 (113) What's your major?
- Item 251 (238) Your Area Of Expertise
- Item 262 (14) a fragmento funeral
- Item 277 (221) Nightmare Jobs from Hell
- Item 281 (315) I had this amazing dream last night....
- Item 282 (38) Retirement, savings, and other assorted ugly grown-up things..
- Item 283 (331) You and your father
- Item 284 (464) You and your mother
- Item 285 (16) You and Your Mother-in-Law
- Item 287 (114) Your ex-wife/husband
- Item 292 (53) How did your parents meet
- Item 306 (110) One Year Sabbatical - What Would YOU Do?
- Item 315 (417) What was the best thing you saw today?
- Item 343 (171) Transforming Arsinoe

OPINION

- Item 56 (208) House Beautiful?
- Item 58 (43) The Most Beautiful Thing In Outer Space
- Item 59 (193) Most beautiful thing on Planet Earth
- Item 60 (149) Most Unpleasant Thing on Planet Earth
- Item 61 (196) Most Likely Explanation For the Creation of the Universe
- Item 63 (78) Greatest Artwork of All Time
- Item 64 (169) Most Boring Artist Of All Time

- Item 107 (213) The difference between Mark Kostabi and Jenny Holzer
- Item 134 (65) What Does The Future Hold for Art?
- Item 135 (199) PLEASE TELL ME WHAT THE FUTURE WILL BRING
- Item 159 (192) Remember 1991?
- Item 326 (249) Jeff Koons' dream
- Item 357 (55) Should Ugly People Dance?
- Item 359 (50) My Favorite Work of Art
- Item 337 (8) Quotes about "art
- Item 361 (28) Citizen Kane

MYTHOLOGY

- Item 47 (140) Pan The Nature God
- Item 92 (194) Heroes and Heroines and Acts of Heroism
- Item 103 (13) Myths, Mythology, Legends and Archetypes
- Item 124 (135) Temple of Disembodied Tele-Love
- Item 207 (24) Other Deities and Other Demons
- Item 240 (65) vampires
- Item 340 (124) The Unpretentious Wine Item
- Item 348 (106) Goddess of the Month Club

ECHO

- Item 237 (20) ECHO Classics
- Item 253 (589) The Sociology of Echo
- Item 331 (39) TOPIC D R I F T
- Item 356 (61) The History Of Echo in Under 1000 Postings

THE MR. HAPPY YEARS

- Item 296 (275) Mr. Happy and Mr. Smith on trial
- Item 297 (35) SEXUAL FANTASIES ABOUT
PANMAN
- Item 298 (45) YES YOU LIKE THIS!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Item 299 (5) SMEGMA
- Item 302 (112) Mallarme, Mr. Happy, Four letter words,
etc... (a serious disc)
- Item 293 (78) Hunting!
- Item 294 (33) PANSCAN CRAPPER!!
- Item 295 (56) BORDERLINE: crime, love, satan, art,
joy

YOUR HOST

- Item 49 (21) Pan's Birthday- The on-Line
celebration.
- Item 132 (67) Help The Panman
- Item 137 (37) Panmans Mail Bin
- Item 265 (33) Descriptions of Panman

RIDICULOUS QUESTIONS

- Item 174 (27) Questionaire guaranteed to annoy and
delight
- Item 188 (40) mental image
- Item 190 (74) Amusement ride?
- Item 197 (56) Taste in Your mouth
- Item 236 (27) Favorite hour of the day
- Item 238 (30) Left or Right?

- Item 239 (52) Your favorite lipid
- Item 245 (21) Favorite Bodily Discharge
- Item 247 (22) Your favorite caucus command
- Item 250 (42) Icky Food Combos

That was the set up of my Panscan Computer Conference as of February 93 It has grown since then and I'll tell you rest some other time. Basically I think an Electronic Archive will work best when it is organized and easy to use.

RJ : Dear Mark Bloch, On April 8th I received your last answer to the interview project. I sent the next question in a large envelope to your P.O. Box, but it seems it didn't arrive, or that you haven't found the time to answer it (maybe because of your BIG UN-project. Here I send you the question again....

With the electronic communication things can get out of control rapidly. If your message is interesting and lots of people react to it, how do you deal with answering it all? I believe that at the moment you are mostly communicating by computer and hardly answer any snail-mail? (I'll send this question by snail-mail to see if you still collect your mail at the P.O.Box....)

Reply on : 14-8-1995

Well, Ruud, the answer to your "lots of people" question is in the "it seems it didn't arrive" introduction! Yeah, you see I often DON'T answer my mail anymore- both the snail mail and the Internet mail. I would like to. And I intend to. But what I have learned in my 5 year Ex Post Facto Art Strike (1990-95) and the Word Strike (1991-1995) is that if you don't answer your mail IT REALLY ISN'T THE END OF THE WORLD. Sure, I've missed opportunities and I'm sure I've pissed some people off or just confused them or made

them wonder about me... and for that I am sorry... but I've taken the time for MYSELF these past few years and gotten some interesting answers to some questions that plague all of us.

Namely, that one quality correspondence is better than 1000 superficial correspondences. I used to try to answer everything and (HERE IS THE ANSWER I THINK YOU WERE LOOKING FOR) that meant sitting down with an idea, making a postcard or 8 1/2 x 11 inch page or PANMAG issue and then mailing it out to hundreds of people all at once. That included rubber stamping them all the same more or less, maybe jotting down a short note or two, addressing them very quickly, buying a bunch of stamps and licking them all at once until my mouth tasted like turpentine and slapping them into a mail box. The responses would then pour in- hundreds of letters out equals thousands of letters in- and then I'd do it again. It got me nowhere.

I met a lot of interesting people and established myself as a mail artist in the network but no one really knew who I was or what I do until I met them in person. THEN I was able to give a fuller picture of myself the way you get when you are in a one-on-one correspondence with someone. You write letters. You ask and answer questions. You talk about your daily life.

Both ways of interacting are valuable but for me the mass mailing got tiresome after 15 years in the network. I felt like the Publishers Clearinghouse which is an American company that sends out millions of junk mailings to

everyone with an address. That is not art activity- that is busywork and though it was interesting for a while, it got less interesting over the years. I stopped with the mail in 1990 after mailing out THE LAST WORD, my contribution to the ART STRIKE literature and propaganda and only maintained a few mail relationships. One was with Ray Johnson. I continued to mail him stuff on a daily basis and now that he is dead I am so grateful that I had an opportunity to really devote myself to our friendship in a way that would have been impossible if he was one of a thousand correspondents.

I also kept up my local interactions during this time on Echo a local BBS in New York where my Pascan conference resides.

Now with Listserve on the Internet I am back into corresponding with thousands again. It has it's place but it is not as rewarding as the slow relationships I've built over the past five years with my wife, my new baby Simon, Ray Johnson, and also people like you via the Internet and Fa Ga Ga Ga a mail artist from Ohio whom I have met in person on many occasions face to face in the past five years because he comes to New York often and I go to Ohio from time to time.

But if corresponding with thousands is something that interests a person, it is easy enough: all you have to do is get a table and a rubberstamp and some postage stamps and make a thousand xeroxes of whatever you want and subscribe to Ryosuke Cohen's Brain Cell or Ashley Parker Owen's Global Mail. There is no shortage of mindless

busywork to do. Some people do this almost as a profession and have become very famous without ever having an original thought! But not Cohen and Owens. They know who they are.

It's easy and it's fun and it is a beautiful way to avoid ever having to face yourself. PS there is one other way to do it - the best of both worlds as I have done. Sit quietly doing nothing for 5 years and then take the rest of your life to send each person a long letter. I guess that's my plan for now.

Here ya go.

RJ : Well, I must say I appreciate these personal answers very much. In a way I am doing the same as you, with these mail-interviews I get to know some mail-artists quite good and on the other hand I neglect the non-personal mail I still get in by the dozens in my P.O. Box. In your last answer you also mentioned the building up of a relation with Ray Johnson. Your e-mail message about his death I would like to include in the printed version of this interview. How was your relationship with Ray?

Reply on 8-2-1996 (internet)

MB : We had a pretty cool relationship. We'd call each other up on the phone about twice a month. Sometimes less but usually more. He would call and ask for mail artist's phone numbers or addresses. Or to see if I'd gotten this or that catalogue or letter. I'd call him just to chat or to joke or to ask if he'd seen some book or article about Duchamp.

I think we had a similar idea about mail art. We were both interested in it but we also mocked it a bit. As he told me one day "Mail Art is an industry." I think it's true. It got a bit too large for it's own good at some point in the 80's. Or maybe just too serious for its own good. But Ray I both like to joke so we would joke about mail art. We also would joke about Marcel Duchamp and his last project, The Etant Donnes, and about all sorts of stuff.

We used to talk a lot about TV. We both enjoyed working with the TV on in the background so we would watching the same shows- not on purpose. But often it would be- "hey did you see so and so?" and of course, both of us had. So we would talk about a show or a film or an actor or a scene or whatever. I remember he enjoyed the Fashion series they had on PBS. We also both sat mesmerized by the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas Debacle which was an American political scandal/confirmation hearing for a guy nominated for the Supreme Court. Too hard to explain. But there was a real wonderful cast of characters on that. A guy named Doggett Ray and I both couldn't believe. And a black woman I enjoyed watching very much. I remember Ray said "Float her down the Nile!" and I made a piece of art about her as a Nefertiti-like statue afterwards.

That is how our conversations went. They were very free-form, very lighthearted and fun. Kind of making puerile jokes about all sorts of intellectual subjects. And finding profound synchronicities in things like stupid made-for-TV movies.

Ray loved to make fun of Arsenio Hall, a stupid talk show host. I think we were both equally repulsed and fascinated by the constant stream of mindless entertainment. I miss talking to him.

I used to write down a lot of the things Ray said in our calls. It started out that I would just jot down something he said- a name he dropped or whatever. Someone I'd never heard of. To look up afterwards. But as time went on I began to write down everything he said. I can write quite fast from over 20 years of journal-writing so I'd make notes and piece them together after I hung up. Now that he's dead I am so glad I did that. I look through some of the things he said and find whole new worlds to explore. He was always recommending books to read. I am glad now I can go back and read them. Or look up people he mentioned. I've met a lot of them since his death quite by accident. I run into people and we talk about Ray and then I go home and look them up in my Ray data base and sure enough, there they are. He mentioned everyone! I like to theorize that he was a bridge between people and now that he's dead- jumping off a bridge- we are left to make the connections ourselves. At the same time, there are so many things I wish I could ask him now. I asked him just before he died if I could do a video interview with him and he seemed excited by the idea. I'm sorry we never did it.

I think Ray and I understood each other. We communicated in weird non-verbal verbal Taoist talk show code. I enjoyed sending him mail art. He'd send me a lot too. I'd like to gather it all up at some point. I have a lot of it collected

here but there are still dozens and dozens of envelopes in my archive that I need to find eventually.

I really think he decided on his death many years ago so I would like to find them all and look for clues. Plus I would just like to have them around because I miss Ray as a friend and a mentor.

He helped me a lot. He introduced me to lots of wonderful people. He used to constantly be filling in little gaps in my knowledge. Huge gaps, really. Ray was the type of person I could call up and ask any question of. He'd gladly respond if he was in the right mood. If he was not in the right mood he'd say "I don't know" or "Who cares?" or answer with a riddle. But the answers he gave always lead me in the right direction.

Most of our conversations were like long free associating poems that started somewhere and ended nowhere. They'd begin with an excuse to call and then meander all over the place, taking weird turns with every pun and obscure reference. We both liked puns and we both enjoyed TV and pop culture. I should say that he LOVED the TV show *Twin Peaks* and so did I. He told me once he thought it was the best show ever on TV. If you really want to know what our friendship was like, watch that show. It sort of flopped along like that...

RJ : Well, the show was here on Dutch Television too, but at that time I wasn't watching that much television. So I will watch out for it when it comes back again, or when I see

something on video. I want to thank you for this interview Mark, and I hope we'll stay in contact.

APPENDIX : E-MAIL MESSAGE ABOUT RAY JOHNSONS DEATH.

PINE 3.90 TEKST VAN BERICHT Postvak: INKOMEND
Bericht INTERNET

Date : Thu, 2 Feb 1995 16:24:28 -0500
From : markb@echonyc.com
To : tam@dds.nl
Subject : Ruud Janssen Ray Johnson say 50 times fast

<<MESSAGE from>> Panman 02-FEB-95 16:24
markb@echonyc

Ray Johnson 1927-1995
This time it's for real

I'm sorry to announce that Ray Johnson, the founder of the New York Correspondance School and a man who playfully announced his own death many times, died for real this weekend.

He drowned during a visit to Sag Harbor, New York. He was pulled from the water at 12:35pm Saturday afternoon, January 14, 1995. He was fully clothed- in a typical outfit for him- levi's, a wool sweater, a levi jacket and a wind breaker. He was last seen around 7pm Friday night after checking into the Barron's Cove Inn in Sag Harbor, near the end of Long Island, NY. Sag Harbor is on the north shore of Long Island, about a two hour drive from his home in Locust Valley, a journey he appears to have made in order

to do some drawings at the estate of Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner.

The weather was unusually mild for this time of year. Ray was fond of the water. He often took walks along the shore at Oyster Bay near his home. He was also prone to walking out on piers and docks. There were several near the area where he was found on Saturday. He told me on the phone recently "I'm going to do my exercises," that he was "working on a washboard stomach" by doing "rowing exercises on the beach with rocks." And that he would "walk with rocks" as weights and that he was "feeling very fit."

Ray turned 67 years old on the 16th of October. He was going strong, remarkably fit for a man of that age. He ate no meat, didn't drink, smoke or partake of recreational drugs. He worked from morning until night, often with the television on in the background. As usual, he was still making up new incarnations of his CorresponDANCE School, the latest one I had heard of being the "Taoist Pop Art School." He had taken up photography in recent years and took daily walks where he would make photos. I also noticed that only weeks ago he had finally retired the rubber stamp with his return address on it that he had used for years in favor of a new one. I had meant to ask him about that.

Born in 1927 in Detroit Michigan, Ray Johnson's first experiences using the mail as a medium for art have been documented as early as 1943 in a correspondence with

his friend Arthur Secunda. In the late 40's- early 50's (?) he attended the experimental Black Mountain College in North Carolina where he studied with Joseph Albers and Buckminster Fuller among others. He has influenced thousands of people, from other Black Mountain faculty like John Cage and Willem and Elaine DeKooning to his contemporaries like Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns and the Fluxus group (whom) he met when he moved to New York in the 50's) to an entire generation of younger artists who called him "the granddaddy of mail art." History may also eventually see Ray Johnson as the first Pop artist. His minimalist collages using the images of James Dean and Elvis pre-date Andy Warhol's and most of his contemporaries by several years. In addition to making elegant collages, which he called 'moticos," Ray hosted many happenings and events at various locations around Manhattan in the 1960's. These actions drew everyone in the art world and started the cross-pollination of personalities that became his Correspondence School. He would send things to friends and strangers alike, asking them to add to them and send them on to another person, often using his unique brand of intuitive word play as his guide. Some of this activity is documented in *The Paper Snake* published by Dick Higgins' Something Else Press. He has been called "the most famous unknown artist in the world."

Ray lived on Suffolk Street on the Lower East Side until 1968 when he was mugged-around the same time- if not the same day- that his friend Andy Warhol was shot by Valerie Solanas. He decided to leave the city and his friends artist Richard Lippold and collector Arturo Schwartz

reportedly were instrumental in his moving to "the Pink House" on 7th Street in Locust Valley, from which he never moved. He worked there, almost hermit-like with the exception of his voracious appetite for phone calls and correspondence, mysteriously and prolifically for over 25 years.

Many people wanted to show his work but he preferred his quiet admiration of the sage Lao Tse. His last major show was at the Nassau County Museum of Art in the mid-eighties and a gallery show in the 90's in Philadelphia of his "A Book About Modern Art." A catalogue raisonne' was in the works. He had recently done one of his informal non-performances which he called "nothings" at a gallery in Long Island. He told me in one of our last phone calls, "Will you come to my show at Sandra Gering in January? I'm doing a half a nothing. I can't decide whether to do it in the first half or the second half."

Many of us who know each other in the art world and its fringes have that pleasure because of Ray Johnson. As the extent of his influence on 20th century art and "letters" continues to be uncovered, we will surely miss Ray Johnson, the man. In spite of his Taoist fondness of nothing, Ray was really something.

-Mark Bloch
PO Box 1500 NY NY 10009
January 15 1995

(Updated version to come)

KEITH BATES

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH KEITH BATES (UK)

Started on: 15-8-1995

Ruud Janssen : Welcome to this mail-interview. First let me ask you the traditional question. When did you get involved in the mail-art network?

Reply on 19-9-1995

(Together with his first answer Keith Bates sent me the documentation of his 'ARTISTCHEQUE'-project, an artistchequebook, and also some info on his newest project)

Keith Bates : I started doing mail art in 1983. I attended an Open University Summer School in which the Polish artist Henryk Gajewski ran a course called "Networking". Some things in life, you know immediately are for you - it was like that for me with mail art, I fell in love with the concept!

RJ : It seems everybody has his or her own views about mail art. Which concept of mail art do you mean?

Reply on 3-1-1996

KB : I simply love the idea that there existed a network of artists who worked in physical isolation, but exchanged their work, It seemed a superb social outlet for creativity, not tied up with money and profit; a social function bound up with ideas of mutual respect, tolerance, democracy, the lot. And it was fun!

I tend to organize one mail art project every year or so. In addition I try to answer all the mail I receive (except for thank you's and confirmation of receipt letters, etc.) and to participate in all the projects I hear about (unless they really didn't interest me). I do however work very slowly; life is busy with other things, so I prefer snail mail to the electronic variety. I'm also not that into letter writing, writing is hard work and for me the occasional letter is an extra to the exchange of mail art.

RJ : Well, when you are slow in answering, this just will mean that this interview will take some time to finish. No problem really. In your answer you mention some interesting things. It seems that you focus mainly on the mail art projects. To give the readers of this interview some idea of what you have done so far, could you mention a few of your projects and tell me what they were about?

Reply on 10-1-1996

KB : I like the way modern art movements have reappropriated graphic design techniques. Mail art does this all the time with artistamps and rubber stamps. A lot of my projects have focused on different graphic design formats and I have based mail art projects on comic book frames (1983), stamps (1984), tickets (1985), jigsaw pieces (1990), shop receipts (1991) and bank cheques (1995). I have also organized projects using fragments of mail artists' works - Elements in 1986 and my current "Studio Floor" project with Leanda Ryan.

Some of my projects have just been realized as documentation - a booklet, catalogue, photographs and address-list, cassette tape, etc. In 1991 I did a project called "Jackson Pollock's Shoes" asking mail artists to send me accidental masterpieces by their favorite artists. That project was realized as a spoof Christie's auction catalogue.

Other projects involve a show or exhibition. My last project, Artists' cheques, not only involved making Artistcheckbooks for contributors but also exhibitions in Covent Garden (London) and York. My "English Suppressionists" project (1993) about an imaginary movement resulted in an illustrated booklet about Englishness and an exhibition in Brighton.

RJ : Lots of activities since your start with mail art! I notice that the years 1986 and 1992 are not in your list with activities (tourism-year and DNC-year).

For me these years were full of meetings with other mail artist (actually also the years 1985 and 1991 for me personally). I remember you had quite specific ideas about those two special international projects, about meeting the other mail artists. Are these views still the same in the year 1996, which has just started?

Reply on 19-1-1996

KB : Yes, I don't think it should be expected or assumed that mail artists will wish to visit each other.

I did attend a Congress meeting at the Tate Gallery in 1986, it was a bit of fun but I don't think I gained any deep insights from the experience. The whole Tourism thing was hailed as a logical next step for mail artists, almost obligatory. I just tried to defend the corner of those who wanted to mail art, those who couldn't or didn't want to congress.

RJ : Another "logic step" some mail artists think of, is the e-mail and the internet as a new way of communicating. I myself have explored this form already, and still prefer the traditional mail. I only use e-mail if the digital form is essential (as in not having to retype texts) or speed is essential (a large text of 20 pages gets at the others address in a few minutes). Have you any specific thoughts about this new communication form?

Reply on 22-3-1996

KB : E-mail and the internet can be used as an extension of the mail art network by those who have access. I don't at the moment, but I wouldn't preclude the possibility for the future. It's worth remembering that a lot of people who do mail art don't have a computer let alone access to the internet.

I admit to being a sucker for hard copy rather than the screen image. I like the whole mail art thing of envelope, stamps, the colors and textures of papers, inks, paints, the mixed media extravaganza. I'm not convinced that e-mail compares to the richness of the snail mail experience.

E-mail would also be too fast for me. I mail art slowly, I can't be a high-powered, mail-the-entire-world zealot. I enjoy doing mail art when I want to and when someone has asked for something that inspires me. I try to keep it fun, and part of the fun is the relaxed exchange over several months, not a few hours. I suppose I must piss some people off but you can't please everyone.

RJ : When you regard mail art as a relaxed exchange than probably the network you are in contact with isn't that large at the moment. Or am I wrong and are you (like a lot of mail artists) not able at all to answer all the mail you get in?

Reply on 10-4-1996

KB : Funnily enough I've just found a few invitations to mail art projects whose deadlines I've missed! Guilt trip.

To a certain extent a mail artist can control the amount of mail art he or she receives, the best way to ensure a full mailbox is to respond to communications quickly, the easiest way to back off a bit is to allow more time for your response.

I am afflicted by the dual mail art miseries - time and money. Because of my job as an art teacher, I often get knackered as a term progresses and I do more mail art during school holidays. In addition to that, I am feeling rather poor at the moment, and since I seperated from my wife I don't have as much spare cash to give to mail art. Nevertheless, even as I write, Leanda and I are preparing to collage the studio floor and the documentation for this project will put me deeper in debt. I am still addicted.

RJ : The final documentation of a mail art project sometimes is just a Xeroxed address-list. Your documentations are normally quite special. What is important in a mail art documentation?

Reply on 22-5-1996

KB : Thank you for the compliment. I do put a lot into my project documentations. They are works of art.

Works which could not have existed without the contributors.

Although putting together project documentation is hard work, I enjoy this aspect of mail art. I like to get some personal touch into each documentation if possible. I have nothing against photocopiers, I use them all the time for my tickets and labels, but if I just receive an address list as a documentation to a mail art show I've participated in I consider it to be a sign of life, no more. On the other hand, exciting documentation is for me a real reward of networking, I love it! It is not essential if my work is used in documentation, but it is much more exciting if it is, it's nice to feel appreciated and valued.

The perfect documentation would show every contributor's work, but sadly mail art exists in the real world and most mail artists are not rich. Money is scarce and sponsorship for mail art projects is rare, particularly here in Britain. If a Xeroxed address list is all someone can afford, that will do - especially if a personal 'thank you' or something is enclosed.

RJ : You mention 'particularly here in Britain'. Are there other things in mail art that are 'typical British', or is this a stupid question?

reply on 23-8-1996

KB : I don't really know if there are things that are typically British about mail art. I suspect the kind of silly, surreal humour that runs through the work of Michael Leigh and Don Jarvis is maybe typically British. My "English Suppressionists" project was an attempt to define my Englishness and I suppose I wondered if my opposition to Tourism might be linked to an English reserve and island mentality.

RJ : Maybe some of the readers don't know your project English Suppressionists , so maybe you can tell a bit more about it. How did you attempt to define your Englishness and what was the result?

reply on 29-11-1996

KB : In 1992 I did a lot of thinking about the facets of my identity. Being English was hard to define, so I asked mail artists to send something about the subject by joining an imaginary art movement, the English Suppressionists. I received stuff about stereotypes, ideas about language, humour, history, politics, surreal connections. The atoms of identity.

I think that Stephen Perkins best summed it up by explaining that identity is strongest when you have to fight for it. Maybe because the English have tended to dominate the British Isles, it is the Scots, Welsh and Irish communities who make more of their national identities.

Perhaps the English have sat back and basked in the glory of British achievement, history, the Empire, and a language that is pervasive. If the fight forges identity, I guess that's why it's lacking.

Perhaps if you are less worried about nationhood and nationalism, you're free to think globally, to consider yourself human rather than belonging to this or that nation. Or maybe that's 2 luxury only the comfortable and privileged can expect.

RJ : You have been doing mail art for a long time now. Did you notice any big changes in the mail art network over the last decade? If so, which changes do you find important?

answer on 5-1-1997

KB : I suppose the network has become well-established in the years I've been mail-arting. And become establishment to a certain extent, taught in colleges and sponsored by industry. Not necessarily bad things, but in the early eighties I had a real sense of joining something radical, and although part of what I perceive results from my familiarity with mail art practices, I think there is generally less frenzied excitement about the mail art network. People now know what a network is.

There are mail artists who see the electronic network as successor to mail art. mail art certainly provided the template for free exchange, maybe the

internet has taken some wind from mail art's sails - if you want to start serious networking in 2000 I guess you buy a computer. It just hasn't grabbed me yet, even if I had the spare cash. I saw the David Hockey show at Manchester City Art gallery the other day. He had a fax wall. Fax walls are a good argument for postal art.

Artistamps had a good decade. Major growth. Color photocopies and color printouts of computer art too. Black & White photocopies have become annoying to some, but not half as annoying as chain letters. I still enjoy collage stuff - I got a nice little one from Vittore Baroni only this morning.

I'm not sure if Tourism and networking Congresses changed the mail art world while I was in the bath. I think not, though I nearly met Jonathan Stangroom a few months ago - but not quite!

RJ : Have you kept all of the mail art you have received over the years? What is the future of your "archive"?

answer on 8-4-1997

KB : Well, I don't think I'll be selling my archive to sponsor my Touristic activities! I've kept a wardrobe full of treasures, much of it still in the original envelopes and stored in box files without any real filing system. I've certainly not tried to keep every piece of mail art I've received and I'm

sure I've recycled some really valuable items in my time, but I can't keep everything I receive so I tend to hang onto the things that most appeal to me at the time.

RJ : Should I ask a future question about mail art romances?

answer on 8-4-1997

KB : I'm not sure if you could call Leanda and I a mail art romance. I taught her art at high school many moons ago and when she left to go to college we kept in contact with mail art and she occasionally popped into school for a chat. When she went to university two years later, romantic sparks began to fly and I'm still besotted after almost 3 years!

RJ : The funny thing about this is that I read about you and Leanda in a mail art documentation (by Lancilotto Bellini, Italy) where mail artists were invited to give a short 'CV' about themselves. Yes, I would call it a mail art romance since you kept contact in a mail art way as well. Most long-participants in the network know about Bill Gaglione and Anna Banana. John M. Bennett told in his interview that he also met his wife through mail art. Vittore Baroni suggested in his interview that he knew a lot about mail art romances (see the last question he answered) and yet a lot about romances in the mail art network hasn't been written. Is it

easy the expose one's privat life to the mail art network?

(together with the question I sent Keith Bates the interview with Vittore Baroni, so he could read what he said as well)

next answer on 16-6-1997

KB : I think so. You expect mail artists to be broad-minded and tolerant of other's opinions. Even so, I was at first a bit nervous about how mail artists would react to the fact that I had been Leanda's teacher and the 24 years difference in our ages. I half-expected some disapproval but it didn't seem to bother anyone and we received some very nice comments like John Held Jr.'s "Age is just age".

Revealing details about your private life to family or neighbours is very "in your face", proximity can make disapproval dangerous ; in many jobs details about an unconventional private life can have economic repercussions. I think that distance and interval enable the networker to be less concerned about the consequences of revelations and more concerned about genuine expression.

RJ : Some mail artists never seem to write or even think about the negative sides there are to mail art. They like to praise mail art, the free exchange, no-money involved, 'documentation to all'-principle, etc. An example was how people reacted to the project by

K. Frank Jensen (Denmark) when he started his 'missing documentation' project, where he wanted to list all the promised documentations that never were sent out. You stated in your answer "You expect mail artists to be broad-minded and tolerant of other's opinions". Do you think that the average 'mail-artist' is different then the 'average person'? (Yes, I know, maybe a difficult question.....)

next answer on 25-4-1997

KB : Lots of mail artists don't really write about mail art at all, but I suspect we do think about negative aspects - time and money problems, will it all be superseded by the internet, the invasion of the Killer Tourists. Missing documentation is probably the least of my worries and in general I think mail art deserves whatever praise we lavish on it.

I have probably got a rather romantic view of mail artists but I think it's good to be a touch idealistic about things that mean a lot to you. I suppose you have to be prepared to moderate your idealism with realism, but part of being passionate about something involves setting aside logic and common sense, and just doing it because you've got to do it.

I think I rather innocently assume artists generally to be more balanced , tolerant and liberal than ordinary folks, other people tell me that artists are more likely to be self-centered, egotistical and abusive to their nearest and dearest. But mail artists

I do expect to be different to the average person because he or she has chosen to be involved in a mutual activity with a very real sense of giving as well as receiving. Choosing to give makes people nicer. Mail art feeds your ego and also puts it in a wider perspective through collective goals. Each mail artist largely controls his or her own level of participation and financial outlay. More control, less stress, nicer person?

RJ : With your last answer you (as usual) enclosed some more tickets and other printed matters. The one I liked the most this time: "What is beauty? - It is the sudden flash of truth". by Joseph Beuys, a Quoticket. I remember that you also did a project called "Jackson Pollock's Shoes" where you asked mail artists to send their accidental masterpieces by their favourite artists. You seem to be influenced a lot by these modern artists. What do they teach you?

next answer on 28-8-1997

KB : I've just watched a television interview with Paul McCartney who was asked if he ever heard someone else's song and wished he'd written it. Sometimes you see an artwork that makes you wish it was your creation. Sometimes you find people who have similar ideas to your own or who have explored the same corners and it gives you a feeling that you're not alone, you're part of a larger process. Other artists' work can help put your own

into context and it can also present new possibilities and fire your imagination.

Some of the mail art projects I've most enjoyed contributing to have been tributes - Creative Things's Homage to Kurt Schwitters was superb. There was a project about Joseph Beuys a while ago, more recently Warhol and Renoir, and the current tribute to Cavellini. It gives you an excuse to reasearch or copy and try to do it their way. Or take the piss and do a Cadbury's Renoir chocolate box design.

RJ : Some mail artists copy a lot from others (mail artists with typical styles or the Dada of Fluxus-movements). Most artists try to develop their own style. Is a mail artist an artist? Is it o.k. when a mail artist only copies what other do?

next answer on 5-11-1997

KB : I've stopped worrying about copying. Copy widely enough and you'll end up with something new in collage or post-modernist fashion. They say "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery", and if you have something to say, you will find your own voice.

I'll never be the most origina; artist in the world, but I add my voice and it's fun to do things differently.

The old question "is it Art?" is a bit meaningless. Art is an open concept and anyone can be an artist (just by doing art) , mail art included. I suppose you might not consider a straight copy to be a very good artwork, so perhaps a better question might be "is it good art?"

RJ : Together with your answer for the interview I received Vittore Baroni's book "Arte Postale". A beautifully done book in italian language about the mail art network where you are included as well. But again a book done by a mail artists and not an outsider to the mail art network. Do you think one of these days an outsider of the network might write a book on this mail art?

next answer on 6-12-1997 (by e-mail)

KB: I can't help but feel that mail art is best experienced from the inside, by participating, so I think it is good that mail artists are the ones to put our practices into a wider context. Without any doubt outsiders will write books about mail art; they write about it now in art magazines and commentaries in catalogues and documentation. It's only a matter of time before the definitive history of mail art is written by an android.

RJ : How does it feel to send out e-mail?

next answer on 5-9-1998

KB : That's better! I'm back to long delays and snail mail. Sorry about that, I've been working, doing some music, and Leanda and I have been to New York. Add a holiday in Cephalonia and it all makes meager mail art moments. I'm trying to catch up with a horrendous backlog.

I did feel a bit dizzy after sending you the e-mail but I don't feel any lasting ill-effects. I've even been trying with the idea of buying a Mac and a modem if the finances pick up sufficiently. Leanda's enthusiasm for HTML and webby things has rubbed off on me a bit. For the moment I'm a paper fetishist, a dead tree addict with an enduring passion for sweet smelling envelopes - don't you just love the golden colour and crispy texture of the American envelope I'm sending this answer in!

(The next question was only sent out on November 11th 1998 because I took a break in the interview-project)

RJ : Yes, I am still fond of that paper mail as well, although I do use a lot of electronic bits and bytes in my communication nowadays. You mentioned 'music' in your answer. Didn't you once make a beautiful tape with music related with the theme mail-art?

(The interview never got finished but is published anyway.)

DOBRICA KAMPERELIC

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH DOBRICA KAMPERELIC
(YUGOSLAVIA).

Started on: 3-11-1994

Ruud Jansen : Welcome to this mail-interview. First let me ask you the traditional question. When did you get involved in the mail-art network?

Reply on: 29-11-1994

Dobrica Kamperelic : Dear Ruud, if I remind well, my friend _arko Rošulj, visual-poet, literary critic, technical editor in publishing house NOLIT (where I'm working too) gave me in 1978 some m.a. invitations and introduced me with some interesting art-people/alter-artists.... Than, I've started to collaborate in/with WEST-EAST, international association for concrete and visual poetry, I found many addresses from alter-artists all over the world and became a mail-artist that time. My first (collective) project/exhibition has been in 1981 at Beograd's Town Library (where I've been working 1976/1977) and was named "ARS AS

IDEA". After this project I've been real mail-artist with many m.a. projects, contacts, full-relationships (meetings) etc.. etc..

RJ : Most mail-artists know you best by your magazine "OPEN WORLD" of which you are now preparing Nr. 82. In spite of the economical boycott and crisis situation in Yugoslavia you still managed to keep on publishing this magazine. How important is this magazine for you, and how important is this magazine for the m.a. network?

Reply on : 20-3-1995

(Due to the WAR-situation in Yugoslavia the second question never arrived in Beograd. I found this out when I wrote to Dobrica again and asked him again for his second answer. Dobrica then wrote me that the letter was lost, but he send an open answer that follows up his first answer. I used this reply as his second answer)

DK : When I started with international art-communication in the far seventies, as collaborator of WEST-EAST international association for concrete + visual poetry, I did my best for international understanding and art cooperation, broaden my mind. I've done over 20 mail art projects (exhibits, performances, art-actions, radio-

network projects, feed-back card projects etc.) and more than 60 foreign guests (performers, mail artists or just artists) from Japan, Holland, Canada, Italy, Germany, Belgium, USA, Switzerland, Norway, Hungary.... Of course, many, many meetings with (former) YU mail artists, cooperative projects under UN sanctions, isolated, frustrated.... And I'm still incarnation of an OPEN WORLD(SIC!) = the title of my m.a. magazine from 1985 (just ten years ago I started with it). Nowadays, in a sense let down, nothing special happened in the network: we/networkers couldn't change this (walking) fuckin' world of rich countries (very few) and many, many poor people in Asia, Africa, South America, Europe.... Art institutions are still closed, usually, for mail art. Naughty artists who make it couldn't explain the essence of it... The most part of people couldn't understand what we are doing and what we want to do. This is not just clear, better is - communication art and/or network.

As a member of two art associations (fine artists and writers) in my country I have sometimes problems with my mail art activity (its silly activity as my friends/artists and writers understood it). I've spent very much money in the passed 15 years.... Why am I still in the mail art network? Well,, because I'm still a dreamer, I'm still believing in

OPEN WORLD, I prefer friendship, I like the exchange of good art ideas (materials is usually poor!) and energy.... I'm an utopist, that's a fact.

Oh, its determined by time and money (any m.a. engagement) into stuffy situation of art-market and "serious" art. Bearing this in mind, I'll make new bigger mail art projects.... and I am dreaming about a network world trip (just dreaming)... If I'll realize it I'll make a new book and finish my activity, probably.

RJ : Even during this war-time in Yugoslavia you continued with you mail-art and did some wonderful projects. Could you tell a bit more about that?

Reply on : 11-4-1995

DK : Thanks. Yes, I did. Out of spite, since 1991 , summer (when Bob Kirkman from Chico/California was my guest) war-time in former Yugoslavia still exists, I did several projects.... 1991/1992. I made 5 solo exhibitions and over 20 performances, installations and rest-actions. In 1992 I also published the book "Art as communication". In 1993 , under strong embargo situation and UN sanctions v.s. Yugoslavia and fuckin' blockade, when my existence was in danger, I made next multimedia-

art projects (not strict m.a. , but it included m.a. too): "INTERRELATIONSHIPS" , "FLYING-ART OPEN WORLD SHOW" and "BACK THE SMILE ON FACES". All those international exhibitions + multimedia-art programs (performances, installations, video-art etc.) I realized in extreme hard times. I became a member of ULUS (Serbian Fine Artists Assoc. - section for Expanded Art Media) and UKS (Serbian Writers Assoc.) and my projects (not me!) got some money from the Government of Serbia-Secretary for Culture..... But, it was enough only for travel-pay of our guests (Andrej Tišma, Nenad Bogdanovi_, Jaroslav Supek.... mail-artists/networkers), for petrol (in my "FLYING-UP" project) very expensive 1993, for some poor documentation etc. Especially, "FLYING-UP" projects, realized at Museum of Modern Art, was original and special in that time, but.... 1994. I curated "ARTISTS' FREE ZONES" projects at NUBS gallery and help next exhibitions by prof. Kun Nam Baik (Korea), Almeida M,E, Sousa and MANDRAGORA assoc. (Portugal), prof. Shozo Shimamoto, famous Japanese artist, John Held Jr. (USA) , AU group from Japan.... So, my international art-cooperation never stopped. Since 1991, I had some guests: Bob Kirkman, Angela + Peter Küstermann (Germany), Livia Cases (Italy)

and John Held Jr. (USA). Those are all my guests in the past five years. Before war-time I have had more than 50 guests from Japan, USA, Holland, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Hungary, Belgium, etc. My last trip out of Yugoslavia was in 1987 (Italy and Germany). I haven't enough money for travel, nowadays visa for travelling out of YU is a problem too... but also I haven't had calls from my friends as before the war-time. And art-cooperation with artists from Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia.... stopped. Yes, we try to renew it (some nice signals are coming from Slovenia and Macedonia) and we have some cooperation with Serbian artists from Banja Luka (Bosnia/Republika Srpska).

So, on the whole, I'm living hard in abnormal situation and my art activity is REALLY the way/solution to stay myself/normal and as *modus vivendi* - to exist!

RJ : There is now also a new magazine called ARTEFACT, in which you do the mail-art section. What is the idea behind this new magazine?

Reply on : 25-4-1995

DK : Yes, but let me explain something about ARTEFACT. Firstly, I'm editor for Expanded Art

Media (this is the title of my Section at Serbian Fine Artists Assoc.) and owners+directors are : Dragan Pavlov (sometimes networker and founder/owner of DEDALUS publishing/small-house), general-editor, Boris Vukovi_ (who comes from Australia), art director+designer, Pedja Krsmanovi_, technical editor/computer etc. and some young people + editors.

ARTEFACT is NOT a typical m.a. zine. ARTEFACT is a magazine for different art/media: literature, film, theatre, music, design..... expanded media (installations, performances, video-art, visual poetry, etc.) including mail-art too. Also its an international art review on 56 pages, not so luxus, but, you can see, on very good paper and with good design. But in Beograd City and Yugoslavia, we have some very good art magazines, such as there are: "NEW MOMENT" , "ETERNA", "FINE-ART LIFE" , "GOLDEN EYE" , "PROJECT-A/r/T" , "BEORAMA".... compared with ARTFORUM, FLASH ART, HIGH PERFORMANCE, ART in AMERICA etc.

Basic idea of ARTEFACT is to draw attention with real alter-art news and get to know art-people here with alternative artists all over the world (so this magazine is in English too). But also give a chance

to artists who haven't a chance for affirmation into the "big" and famous art-magazines or at exclusive artspaces..... We started with ARTEFACT in January 1995. We have three promotions at nice artspaces with exhibitions (you participated, dear Ruud, too), performances video-art.... and also we introduced the magazine on TV programs, in newspapers, on radio, etc. So, a good start, but we need money and support of artists and real art-lovers all over the world just now!

RJ : The cultural boycott against your country was lifted months ago. Can you already notice any changes? I know from Chuck Welch (Crackerjack Kid) that he is still unable to send you his new book "Eternal Network" from the USA to Yugoslavia just by mail. It was returned to him last month!

Reply on : 16-5-1995

(Together with his answer Dobrica sent his new issue of the 'Open World magazine' , number 84)

DK : Just fine question! I'll be happy when this boycott really stops. At this moment it still exists. Yes, Andrej Tišma told me how Crackerjack Kid's new book sent to him, me, etc. didn't arrive but was returned to the USA. But I hope "Artefact" magazine will travel lucky from Yugoslavia to the USA (to

Crackerjack Kid).... and I can tell you, dear Ruud, how I have had the worst experiences in international art-cooperation and art-communication after 1992. June, after the UN sanctions to YU: firstly many lies about my country and serbian people circulate since 1992. Through the m.a. network too. Than several times I didn't receive art-materials (or just letters) from my friends/artists. PTT communication with Croatia stopped since 1992, there was a temporary stop with Canada and some other countries too. The booklet 'OPEN WORLD' by Steve Perkins (package with 50 issues) I never received it back from him.

But , listen... Bob Kirkman from Chico (USA) wrote me in 1992 how my exhibition there isn't possible because no artspace would accept anything from Serbian artists and I'm cosmopolit firstly! Bob Kirkman was my guest in july 1991 and made a performance (together with me and miss Jasmina Tabak) at Happy Gallery - Students Cult. Centre in Beograd City + exhibition of small art-objects. That time I gave him art-material from me and he promised an exhibition in the USA..... John Held Jr. made a OPEN WORLD show at his MODERN REALISM gallery in 1993. You too at the TAM Gallery, and I'm really happy and thankful to both of you!

Listen, since 1992 I helped exhibitions by prof. Kun Nam Baik , Manuel Almeida E Sousa + MANDRAGORA group, prof. Shozo Shimamoto, AU group.... besides several group shows / international shows (my projects) at very nice artsplaces. So, nothing changed with me and I protected international art-cooperation non-stop.

Mayumi Handa & Shozo Shimamoto helped with exhibition "Embargo Art from Serbia Island" at Tokyo's METROPOLITAN MUSEUM. This was a show by magazine "CAGE" collaborators. FILIMIR made a 200 meters long canvas in Paris as an anti-embargo-art action (action-painting/street-art action)... Most part of YU Networkers (me too) made various anti-embargo art projects since 1992, but we have had very few invitations for coming out of YU and make art-actions live.

Oh, yes, some friends/artists help me with art-materials (from Spain, Japan, Holland, Italy, USA, Belgium,.....) but some stop with art-communication to me.

Besides that, many YU artists (especially alter-artists) left the country (Katalin Ladik, Marko Stepanov, Pedja Šidjanin, Jusuf Had_ifejzovi_, Darko Vulic, Zoran Beli_, Dragan_eravac, etc.) and now live in USA, Holland, Belgium, France,

England, Hungary... but, believe it or not, we are doing since 1992 excellent art here and we are very active just in this hard wartime and blockade. It sounds as paradox, but probably it is because our feelings are so strong. And art-spirit!

RJ : What is essential for being a (mail-) artist?

Reply on: 3-6-1995

DK: The old Latin sentence "Ars longa-vita brevis" probably explains the need for art and the essential need to be an artist, to win life and all limits. To be a mail-artist is a question of cosmopolitan feelings, the need for art cooperation, better understanding between different people and cultures.....

But artists' inner-life, spiritus movens for his activity its a hard question, probably a question for psychologists, art hystorics and sociologists. The fact is that artists see the life different than "normal" people and that they are able to make a fictive life, pictures of life, on special ways. So, what is essential for being an artist is not a simple question.

RJ : When I write to mail-artists in the former (large) Yugoslavia, I always have a problem with talking about the politics behind the war. I sometimes feel I am asked to choose sides, and in a way I think the

real truth about the war is difficult to see for all sides (people confronted with the war because they live there, the UN, the people who just sit at home and watch the war on television). Could you help me with explaining what the war is about, and if an artist should get involved with politics? I know it is a difficult question.

Reply on : 20-6-1995

(In the months May and June the problems in Bosnia got larger. Airstrikes of the United Nations in Pale, UN-Hostages taken by the Bosnian Serbs throughout Bosnia. At the moment I receive this answer the last hostages have been released, but the fights around Sarajevo are intensified again because the Bosnian Army now attacks the Bosnian Serbs to break the corridor around Sarajevo).

DK : Yes, it is. But how you can understand all aspects of the war (if I couldn't?) and essential problems of destruction former Yugoslavia? And who help this horror/bloody war?! First of all, Serbs would like YU unity (NOT 'big' SERBIA!) , but rest (Croats, Muslims, Slovenians, Albanians, Macedonians...) wouldn't like it.

A lovely country destroyed after separation of Croatia, Bosnia, Slovenia, Macedonia and we (Serbs and Montenegros) stay in new (small) YU unity. I

still feel as Yugoslavian and cosmopolit although the fact that I am a Serb. I need former YU. I need friendship and understanding from ex-YU friends (now our relationships are broken and I am NOT guilty, nothing changed with me, with my feelings!)

Well, central problem, as I understood, is with Serbs out of Serbia. How save those Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia?.... Because most part of Muslims and Croats wouldn't like Serbs as equal people there. And some Serbs and Croats who accept Alah, different religion from the Turkisch, understand? So, this war is an religion war, war for living spaces (teretories), civil war too. The fear was "Spiritus Movens" for this war.

I am out of actual politics and try to understand this incredible situation on my very special way. I'm a Serb, but also Slovenian, so... as artist I made a lot of things against the war, but also against YU blockade. My installations (named "signals from Balkan ghetto" , "YU blockade-circulus vitiosus" , "Artists' free zone"....) , performances ("Stepping out from inside" , "Flying-up from Balkan ghetto" , "Get out the dark" , "Destructio unius-generatio alternius"...), exhibits ("INTERREALITIONSIPS" , "FLYING-UP" , "OPNEN WORLD" , "ARTISTS'FREE ZONE" , "BACK THE SMILE ON

FACES"....) are full of symbols which explain my feelings into war-situation and YU blockade/embargo. Maybe, you'll see in the future some of them on video!?

In this fuckin' war some networkers died/were killed (Ke_er II/Satan Panonski , Dragan Kri_i_) , some spent some time as YU soldiers (Nenad Boganovi_ , Aleksandar Jovanovi_ , Šandor Gogoljak) or Croatian and Bosnian soldiers... I haven't had news from many friends since 1991. Some left former YU.... So, many things, many bad things happened and we are still frustrated and unhappy. Most part of the YU networkers made excellent performances , shows , installations etc. just during the wartime and its paradox!

But this question is for Darko Vuli_ from Sarajevo who lives now in France, or for Ratko Radanovi_ , from Banja Luka , who is Serbian soldier there in Bosnia.

ps. I prepare a new book "OPEN WORLD CONTEMPORARY-ART STORY" and in this book I will explain many aspects (of art-actions) into wartime....

RJ : A new thing in networking is the use of internet , and the sending of E-mail. In Yugoslavia , during

the war-time , not many artists will be able to use this new medium. But, have you thought about the electronic communications? Will the electronic mail-art become more important than the normal mail-art?

Reply on 28-7-1995

(Dobrica's answer came via Sweden with the help of a friend. By separate mail I also received Dobrica's latest issue of Open World #85 , with lots of information about meetings and contacts)

DK: Yes, it seems so... But it is nothing fascinating, this is only the question of technology. I'm afraid it could be the future of m.a. communication and I'm an outsider in that case. No, I haven't computer, fax-machine etc. So, some people from my Section of Expanded Media (Mihailo Risti_ , prof. dr. Marija Preši_) help me sometime with this kind of communication of I use the fax-machine from NOLIT publishing house where I am working.

The same situation is with the rest of the YU mail-artists.... But, 1992, in my project "OPEN WORLD" (international exhibition) I asked networkers to send me fax-messages.... very interesting was the fax-message from Dragan Kri_i_ (he died/was killed 1992, latter...) who sent it from Sarajevo, full

of political jokes, but also some nazi-symbols etc.
about three meters long!

Listen, most important is human-communication
and full contacts=meetings! Electronic
communication is probably most important for
business people and in science or
financial/commercial communication....

RJ: In the last years lots of publications have appeared
in connection to mail-art. Also you yourself have
written a book about it. Are these publications
important for the network? Do they always give a
good view about what the network is all about?

Reply on 13-8-1995

(Between the receiving of the answer and the
sending of the next question the war started again
in Croatia. This time the Croatian army attacked the
Kraijina-area, the part of Croatia that was occupied
by Bosnian Serbs. But which part of land belongs to
whom is difficult to say in this former
Yugoslavia.....)

DK : Yes, I think so... those books are really important
("Correspondence art" by Mike Crane, "Eternal
Network" by Crackerjack Kid, etc.) My first book
"Art as communication", in any case, didn't give the

best view what the network is all about, but it gives some special answers about various art poetics (and how communication exists in inter + multimedia), but also open question of NEW AGE and future arts. My new book "OPEN WORLD, OPEN MIND - NEW ART STORY" should be a book with complete answers made by artists (Dr. Klaus Groh, Katalin Ladik, Miroljub Todorovi_ , Scott McLeod, Ruggero Maggi, Dr. Ken Friedman, Ilija Šoški_ etc.) themselves about their art-poetics and activities (Orbit Art, Performance Art, Signalism, Amazonic World, Fluxus, Dance Macabre Actions etc.) given through interviews. Also I'd like to explain what's happened with the network in the last years, besides rest, with describing the special situation of the YU blockade under UN sanctions and restricted art area (RAA)...

Many periodical publications are important too, your m.a. statements are very important, many rest publications who circulate through the network non-stop..... are "bloody-canal" of the NETWORK and heart (essence) is full communication, personal contacts.

My new book should be all ready at the end of 1995 (the price will be 20 US\$ of 30 DM) and published by publishing house "DEDALUS" from Beograd

with very fresh stories and illustrations.... You, John Held Jr. Angela+ Peter Küstermann, people from my Section for Expanded Art Media and some rest artists are very important people in my new book!

RJ : Well, I will be looking forward seeing your book, but when it is in Yugoslavian language (like your last book) only few networkers will be able to read the texts you write. Is there any chance you will be publishing some english articles too?

Reply on 25-8-1995

DK : Yes, I'll be glad to see the book till the end of 1995. Always there is a problem with money, especially here during the UN embargo, extremely hard economical situation, abnormal conditions.... So, my first book was in Serbian (we haven't a YU language!) language and I'm sorry, I haven't enough money to pay a translator.... and it was also a question of speed (don't forget, January 1994, we had an inflation of 350,000,000% !... We've been absolutely champion of hyperinflation and prices changed two times during the day!)... But, now I haven't problem with translation, most part of texts are now in English language and some were published (in English) in magazines like ND , Cage , Artefact, Clinch and Transfusion...

RJ : Especially because of these difficult times I would like to thank you very much for this interview.
Good luck with your book!

MICHAEL LUMB

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL LUMB (UK).

Started on: 24-11-1994

Ruud Janssen : Welcome to this mail-interview. First let me ask you the traditional question. When did you get involved in the mail-art network?

Reply on: 02-12-1994

Michael Lumb : Hope I pass your test with my answer! It is, of course, an extract from the thesis. Tomorrow I will see my tutor & find-out whether I have to re-write everything - I sincerely hope not!!

(Michael Lumb sent the text "MAIL-ART, A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION", which you will find as an appendix to this interview. It tells about how Michael got involved in the Mail-Art network and what his first projects were).

RJ : A mail-interview is not a test, but if you see it like that I must say you passed perfectly with this long answer. You are now working quite some time on this thesis, and the research you are doing is the

main reason why I started this interview with you. Can you tell me first the main reason why you are writing this thesis? Is it just for graduating, or is there more to it?

Reply on : 12-12-1994

ML : Thanks. Glad I passed, perhaps I see all of life as a test! Your next question is perhaps personal though I think I quite like the distance/personal/warmth relationship. My reasons are perhaps boring to mail-artists. Firstly I feel that there is no existing thorough history and current survey/assessment/critical appraisal and I wanted to write it. Secondly my institution is putting pressure on staff to improve their qualifications and this seemed to be an ideal opportunity to combine the two and get professional guidance with research methods and writing techniques. I hope eventually to get the support of my institution to publish the book & produce an exhibition of examples plus a 'teaching pack' video.

RJ : Could a thesis on mail-art be written by somebody who isn't doing mail-art, and could a thesis about mail-art be understood by somebody who isn't participating in the mail-art network?

Reply on : 23-12-94

ML : Complex. Define a thesis! - Lets take it to be a PhD (100.000 words) thesis. The simple answer to both questions must of course be yes. I must also assume that you mean a thesis of minimum 'Pass' quality. A great deal of a thesis is demonstrating the ability to produce a cogent argument. The subject matter should be written by someone with real enthusiasm for the material and this, in the case of mail art must mean a networker of some years experience. If it is 'properly' written it should easily be understood by anyone but there is no substitute for first-hand experience in everything/anything.

RJ : Let's go back to mail-art. Most mail-artists know of the starting and Ray Johnson's role in this. But mail-art itself is changing over the years very rapidly. The new change is the E-mail services. Will this new communication form take over the traditional mail and also the mail-art?

Reply on : 4-1-1995

ML : My impression is that most mail artists do not know of Ray Johnson! However, I would agree that mail art is changing and has changed. I think I would prefer to refer to mail art networking as distinct from a necessarily conceptual (and enquiring) approach to mail art.

Mail art is primarily concerned with communication. E-mail permits the fulfillment of this. It is also important that mail art should be egalitarian, E-mail is a very long way from becoming egalitarian both in its availability and its expense.

This question could perhaps also relate to the future of books, - part of the pleasure of books is being able to read them in bed, on the train, on the beach. Technology will no doubt permit this in time but it will never be able to replace the tactile quality of a book that is also a fundamental part of the pleasure of mail art. Technology is the way forward for reference material and that also has a part to play in mail art - I would answer this by E-mail if I had access to it for example.

It has been suggested that video (in your home) will replace traditional art. I believe painting; sculpture; photography; printmaking to be dead as vehicles for original creativity. However, the event of going to a gallery still has a function if only active and social (as opposed to unhealthy couch-potato) and single screen video; computer; holography, even virtual reality can not replace the time and travel experience of a multi-media installation.

I therefore see a future that is inclusive rather than exclusive and is therefore pluralistic. The same arguments would seem to me to apply to E-mail and mail art.

As for traditional mail, one might have expected the telephone (in the future the videophone) to have replaced letter writing but again, letter writing can express things that the telephone can not; for example formality. Above all, letter writing is an art, a craft with its individual expressions. This could be carried by E-mail but the personality of the sender in terms of choice of paper, envelopes, handwriting etc. All allow expression that E-mail does not. Further, the lack of immediacy of the letter has advantages as well in terms of consideration of suitable reply. Again, the answer must be in plurality.

RJ : I must say I agree for a large part with your views. Mail art just depends on the tools (paper, pen, computer, stamps, paint, xerox-machine, etc.) the artists has at hand. What tools do you prefer the most in your mail art?

Reply on : 11-1-1995

ML : When you ask me what tools I prefer most in my mail art, I am instantly faced with a problem,

because in their use I have no preference for any tools. I do not gain any pleasure at all from making art. For me the pleasure is in developing the idea and having the completed work. If I could, I would have an assistant to produce all my work to my designs. I do not however agree that mail art 'just depends on the tools' and suspect that you were being provocative in writing that. To me the medium is irrelevant, it is the content that is important. I am not clear as to the intentions of your question, it feels as though the question is about my own working habits, and the answer to that would be very long and complex indeed. Superficially, the answer relates to my interest in the working habits of the great British writer, Anthony Burgess who wrote a fugue every morning (he had trained as a composer), I have in many ways approached mail art in the same way, as an exercise in creativity, an adjunct to my other creative work and teaching; an exercise in creativity and communication. It naturally follows that I have frequently used rubber stamps because of their immediacy, given a number of stamps that reflect my thinking and creative areas of interest. I particularly enjoy responding to projects that I have already explored as part of my own work and can respond to the request with a photocopy or copy

from an edition of a work produced by me at an earlier time. Whatever, I certainly do not recognize a higherarchy of materials or techniques, it is the level of communication that is important.

RJ : This level of communication is an interesting thing. Communication means that there is an interaction, in this case between the artists. Could you tell what you see as 'levels' in this communication, and is it that some levels have certain consequences for you? Can it become more than 'an exercise in creativity and communication' as you call it?

Reply on : 25-01-1995

ML: For me interaction is of paramount importance. Networking frequently is much more than an exercise, but identification of precisely what it is, is very subjective. The levels of communication refer to the degree to which two people are communicating anything meaningful to one another and ultimately, as you imply the affect that that communication may have on the life of one or both of them. It would be possible to list all the ways in which mail art may give that value added something. This will differ for different people at different times in different places and different situations. Primarily, it must be the global importance of peoples understanding each other

more. The importance to the individual is in realizing that she or he is not alone in this world of fears, worries, trials and tribulations. There is no hierarchy of medium, technique or image, purely the way in which the communicated affects the receiver, and this might even dispense with mail art per se and simply be a very personal letter but remains mail art networking because the communication is within the context of the mail art network. This communication does not have to be personal however; the anonymous pass-on may bring humor, warmth or optimism to the receiver at a critical moment and so becomes effective.

RJ: This diversity in mail art is probably the most interesting aspect of it. Sometimes mail-artists go in a specific direction after 'doing the net' for a while. Others become addicted to this diversity. How is this for you?

Reply on : 4-2-1995

ML: I am not aware of a direction that is affected by the Network and certainly no deliberate decisions. I do however have certain parameters, specifically that I am not in a position to spend much money on mail art and certainly am not in favor of any mail art that asks for money. I do not have much free time and

so am not able at the moment to join any project that requires multiple copies.

I enjoy a variety of relationships with different networkers; those who make no pretence at producing mail art any more and simply send letters, those who are in very difficult times (e.g. Bosnia); those with whom I exchange a range of work, (bookarts, postcards, artistamps); those who send lively mail with projects that I can reply to fairly instantly and mostly those with whom I feel a spiritual affinity. I somehow feel that there is an essence to your question that I am missing, something implied about contacts that I am not understanding.

RJ : For me mail art brings new ideas, new contacts, not only 15 years ago, but still today. In a way I am addicted to this diversity that mail art brings. The essence is that this diversity now fits perfectly in my life and for some mail-artists 'doing mail-art' is just a part of their work. So to put the question more precise, has mail-art infiltrated in your life or is it a separate part?

Reply on : 9-2-1995

ML : This is a frighteningly complex and personal question but I will endeavour to answer it. Firstly, I

am not at all sure about addictions, in some senses I do become addicted to things but on the other hand I can just as easily reject them and never look back, so I don't really know. I have no plans to stop networking. I am not sure whether addiction implies enjoyment and I am not really sure, if I am honest, what I enjoy and don't enjoy or why I do things. As an example, for about twenty years or more I drank alcohol every single day but three years or so ago I had an enlarged liver and so stopped for a month and now only drink at weekends (normally) but I am aware of trying to find some sort of reward from the alcohol. Perhaps it is like this with mail art, in that I am trying to find some sort of reward. I am a perfectionist and so consequently despise most things that I do and am disappointed by a great deal of that that I see.

To the second part of your question, whilst I am wary of frustrating you, I am not sure that I understand the question. In the sense that you have used it, I am not sure that I know what life is. Every morning, mail art is part of my routine before I go to work and when I return home if I haven't finished everything in the morning. There was a time, when my children were little that I quite literally involved my family in the production of my work, for instance, on a family Sunday walk,

we would take my portable white canes and search for a suitable installation place in which to photograph them. But, perhaps this was egocentric. It feels as though the answer, or at least in part lies in my answer to your question about working practices. Attempting another tack, I do sometimes wonder, as a loner and with no one to share my art or interests with whether mail art is not my salvation and that without it I might go mad. I am a Nihilist and so it is difficult to find purpose and as an idealist, all too easy to destroy any proffered proof of purpose or value in life, but perhaps it could be said that mail art keeps me going. What is perhaps difficult for me is to sort out the truth in terms of the reality that I do enjoy some things, and certainly enjoy some mail art that I receive, but have very high ideals and so it is easy to objectively question a lot of the things that give me pleasure. Perhaps one of the advantages of mail art is that you can just get on with it and not think. Whilst I claim to be a Nihilist, I do nevertheless have a very strong need for spirituality, (one of the things that I loved about Poland) and abhor Capitalist Materialism, it is difficult to be optimistic in these times.

I have not commented on your point about new contacts; for me it is my link with other human

beings and I suppose for that reason alone, is very important to me but it also feeds my idealism, in that there is always new hope with new networkers to postally-meet.

I am avoiding the temptation to sum up this response, in a sense it shouldn't be because my answer must be complicate and even difficult and contradictory.

RJ : Strangely enough the answer fits perfectly to the question, in lots of ways. But lets focus again on the history of mail-art. On your envelope the rubberstamps "40 years of -55-95- mail art" and "Ray Johnson 1927-1995" are mixed together. Do you have any predictions to what will happen to the mail-art network now Ray Johnson has died?

Reply on : 1-3-1995

ML: I don't really do predictions! However, it does seem to me difficult to imagine what could bring about an end to mail art, now that it has lasted four decades. A possibility of course is that the cost of postage could rise to such an extent that it becomes totally unviable, this seems highly unlikely to me though as I have faith in the need for people to send postcards home when they are on holiday and to send greetings cards. If the cost of postage were to

prohibit this, it would also impact on the very lucrative and thriving Greetings Cards industry and this seems unlikely. Furthermore, whilst I am aware that in countries such as Estonia, networkers have already had drastically to reduce their mail art activity because of escalating postal costs, it also seems likely that as the tide of capitalism catches up with them, so also will the Greetings Card industry and a subsequent fall in the cost of postage. We have already debated the possible impact of technology on the future of mail art and to me it would seem that communication of the sort that mail art provides fulfills a basic need in people that in whatever way the world develops will never go away.

RJ : If everybody has a need for communication (which I think is true) then only a few of all people on earth have chosen the mail-art way. Who becomes a mail-artist? Is it all 'pure chance' that one stumbles on the network? If that is so, will the effect of the INTERNET on mail-art be that the mail-art network will grow even more. What do you think?

Reply on : 9-3-1995

ML : Gosh, what a question. This seems to require an exploration of one's own personal faith rather than a belief about mail art. To a degree, those who

find-out about mail art do so through chance but maybe there is a wider controlling force than just chance, I just don't know. Of course many people are aware of mail art but choose not to explore it. Of these no doubt some make the wrong decision for them in that they would enjoy it if they did pursue it. Is there something about the kind of person who is responsive to learning about things like mail art? - again I am unsure but it seems possible. Is the mailartist a type of person? If so I would like to identify that type for my thesis, although I am arguing that there is not a typical mailartist.

As for the expansion of the network through INTERNET, it seems highly likely, if only because any new chain of information must increase the numbers from a logical point of view. However, it would be useful in considering this question to be able to assess the affect of for example the mail art column in Artists Newsletter in Britain on the number of mailartists and to predict the rise of the INTERNET and the public that it will reach and by when. So, to summarize, the short answer is yes. A longer debate, based on research that would seem to be impossibly difficult given the nature of the mail art network would however be more interesting.

RJ : Even for two mail-artists it sometimes seems to be difficult to talk about the mail art network and what it is in their eyes. Did you succeed in explaining to your tutor what mail art is all about?

Reply on : 20-3-1995

ML: She hasn't asked me! That in itself is interesting because it suggests that people think they know what mail art is, but we networkers know that it is a very complex thing and one that evolves in one's understanding as one becomes more and more involved with an ever wider network. From the point of view of my thesis, she will judge me on the cogency of my argument so that she will assess whether I appear to have logically and thoroughly described mail art however, as she doesn't know what mail art is, she can only judge the cogency, not the accuracy of my description, always assuming that there is such a thing.

RJ : Well, I must say I am becoming more and more curious about the complete thesis, especially the part in which you will write about the years 1980 and later on. The books I have seen so far show me obviously that the writers always are writing about their own network, and that every mail-artist has

his/her own network in mail-art. Therefore every story will be different and only by knowing lots of stories one can find a common basis that is making us do this mail-art. In my eyes all mail-artists have something special that they are looking for which they can't find in their surroundings. Is this true? If so, what are you looking for?

Reply on: 3-5-1995

ML: Your question suggests others, for instance, how am I going to ensure that I do not simply write a personal account of mail art? Of course I cannot be sure but I will not be setting out to write the 'story' of mail art, rather to identify what it is, where it has come from and how it has evolved. From my vast bibliography, I feel as sure as possible that I will not simply tell my own story.

As for what I am looking for in mail art, I think it relates to my next performance, 'An Attempt At Survival In Alien Circumstances Too'. I think we are in alien circumstances and I am particularly aware, having just returned from New York, that there is a whole world 'out there' and I want to be a part of it. So, I want to try and survive and for that I need to communicate, I want to try and make sense of the world and I want to participate and have some fun. I want there to be serendipity in my life.

Mail art seems to me to be the best way to satisfy all those needs especially as it is all things to all men.

RJ : We haven't discussed your performances yet.
Could you describe what they are sometimes like?

Reply on : 12-5-1995

ML : I haven't written about them before so I find the question interesting but one that could result in an extremely long essay if I am not careful. The background interests me in that my Mother was a dancer, my paternal Grandfather a priest and my Father a teacher: all what could be perceived to be performance professions. My early thoughts were of being an actor but I changed and did a degree in theatrical design. I then spent five years in television, giving it up to start an arts center. Throughout this time I continued to produce my own work and realized that fine art was what I should be doing full-time as far as was possible. In May 1968 I wrote my first performance pieces, "The Darkness Concert" these involved dance, music, silence and a cat, as yet they are unperformed. The major part of my work at that time centered around experimental painting but in the early seventies changed to a much more social form of art that took

the artist (me) out of the studio and involved other people going about their daily lives and no longer involved paint.

In 1991 I began a series of photoworks using my own body to explore issues that whilst specific to me, I felt had universal application. In the mail art network I produced the work *Madonna and Child*, asking networkers to send me a *Madonna and Child* in return I sent it back with my face superimposed on that of the child as well as photo-copies of those that others had sent me and full documentation of the project. I did not explain that the purpose was for me to try and experience what it would have been like to have been cuddled as a child.

In 1993 I made my first visit to Poznan, Poland where I had two wonderful weeks with no responsibilities at the Summer Academy and produced my first performance video (I had previously produced my first video artwork in 1983) this was a harrowing piece entitled, 'Rebirth' which was an improvised work where by I methodically removed my clothes, laboriously folding them and then, in the foetal position, tied myself up with string until I was in considerable pain, I then released myself, rubber-stamping my

forehead with the word 'Rebirth'. The following year (1994) I returned to Poznan as a visiting professor and made the video-performance work 'Pathway'. In this I tied chairs to my leg until I was unable to proceed and fell over, finally collapsing under the weight. This work made use of English language in that I tied the chairs to me and that related to family ties, however it is important to state that I deliberately returned to pickup extra chairs, indicating that the ties were of my own volition.

In the winter of 1994 I made a performance in Ipswich, entitled 'Ambition', this was intended to be an 8 hour performance but because of technical problems (the threat of a severed central heating pipe) I had to abandon it after 5 hours. This work consisted of my attempt to produce a construction out of string that would enable me to reach the ceiling. (I was not permitted to make a rope ladder). During this I engaged in debate with the visitors to the performance about the nature of ambition and the pitfalls.

In May 1995 I made my latest performance, this was of 8 hours duration, with no breaks, and consisted of me dressed in black and white with a bowl of water and a bowl of flour, making paste and tearing

images out of a vast pile of newspapers and sorting them out into categories and pasting them to the wall, using nothing but my hands. The work, making reference to the important English performance artist, Stuart Brisley, was entitled, 'An attempt at Survival in Alien Circumstances Too.' At the end of the performance, I scattered the remaining flour and water on the large residue of newspapers and emptied the dregs over my head, falling prone over the papers. Throughout the performance I talked in a fairly low volume about the images but communicated with no one.

My next, projected, performance is to be entitled, 'Pressing Engagement' and will consist of me wedged between a column of newspapers and a beam in the roof of the gallery, 10m up in the gallery for two hours, apparently naked. There will be no dialogue.

I did not plan to move into performance but it feels right at the moment, I can't predict the future but it certainly solves the problem of the marketable commodity in a market that I have serious concerns about.

RJ : In the beginning of the interview you said "I see all of life as a test". Is a performance a kind of test for you?

Reply on 22-5-1995 (disk)

ML: Gosh, what a thought, the answer, spontaneously is yes, but also about survival, clearly, by the fact that I still exist, I am a survivor. Fundamentally, I believe that art must communicate, that is why mail art is so wonderful, in that there is guaranteed communication, and I want to share my experiences with other people, hopefully, if they can identify with any of my pain, they might realize that they are not alone. This appears to be moving off the point of your question, I must ask myself, what are the tests that I am setting myself?

To begin with, undertaking a performance is a test in itself. For me everything that I do is judged (not least by my own harsh standards that always finds everything wanting) but also by those outside. So often with a preview people comment on the wine, ask after your family but never comment on the work. It is really good in the network when you receive feedback on something that you have sent, for example I was extremely nervous about my 'birth canal stamps', I was worried that they would be misinterpreted as being pornographic but felt that I had to make them. The feedback was the most positive I have ever received from the most number

of people who happened to be predominantly women.

'Rebirth' was a very difficult piece, being naked, although there was no 'full frontal' as the work was not about that, but especially revealing so much of my inner self and then sharing the video-performance afterwards in a very public way. My first eight hour piece, 'Ambition' (which was abandoned for technical reasons after 5 hours) was very much about endurance but nothing compared with my latest eight hour work '...Alien...' which did last for eight hours with no break at all and involved no communication at all.

About eight years ago, I explored a series of drawings which consisted of covering the surface of the drawing paper with candle wax and attempting to draw with a hard pencil which would not take on the wax. I also attempted to draw difficult technical shapes free hand, intuitively. I do seem often to need to make things difficult, partly the Protestant Work Ethic which I was very much brought-up with but it is also as though it can't be taken seriously unless it has involved considerable struggle. No pain, no gain. Maybe I need to convince myself that I am serious and that my work

(I?) am worthwhile. This question has I am afraid resulted in a very egocentric answer.

RJ : Well, your answers are certainly worthwhile. I guess it is time now to end this interview unless there is something I forgot to ask you?

Reply on 28-05-1995

ML : Thank you for your kind comments. I have found the interview very interesting and quite revealing, enabling me to consider a number of personal issues.

RJ : Thank you for the interview and good luck with your thesis!

APPENDIX : TEXT THAT CAME TOGETHER WITH THE FIRST ANSWER.

MAIL ART, A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION.

It is perhaps ironical that mail-art attracts shy individuals who by definition tend to be aware of the network of people, from all walks of life and not necessarily artists, who communicate their creativity through the postal system. Thanks initially to the printing of Michael Leigh's listing of current mail art projects in the journal Artists' Newsletter since 1989 the network has become more accessible to a greater number of people in Britain.

My own involvement with mail-art predates my knowledge of the network by some eight years. In 1980 I looked to the postal system as another vehicle for conceptual ideas and sent my first piece to a friend living in France. Entitled 'Nothing to declare' it grew out of the frustration that I had encountered when trying to get permission to take one cubic foot of English soil through the customs to exchange for one cubic foot of French soil. 'Nothing to declare' was the inscription inside the nine envelopes sent and 'Artwork' was the inscription on the customs docket. A tenth envelope was the return to me of the nine.

In 1981 I made my first attempt at "Pass the Parcel, Package Tours." which was an idea based on playing the children's game in reverse, i.e. that the package that I sent would be added to and sent on to another artist, to travel the world and ultimately to return to me. I chose an artist at random and received no response, similarly the following year I tried again with another artist, who like the first was evidently not a mail-artist.

The same year, whilst trying to while away the time invigilating an exam, I occupied my mind with the question of how many ways it would be possible to stamp a second class letter in terms of different denominations of stamps, I soon realized that it was not a job for my level of mental arithmetic and subsequently worked out that the answer was 275. This was to become the score for my second mail art project whereby I ran through the permutations, at the rate of one per day for 275 days, sending the stamps on identical envelopes with a rubber stamped address to a friend in Devon. For me this work was important in several ways that I was later to realize are the constituent parts of mailart's public. Firstly I found that my local post office initially expected me to take the equivalent value of stamps in a different denomination and so it became necessary to explain the project to the post-mistress who soon became as fascinated as was I by my weekly purchase and the aesthetic appearance of the subsequent envelopes. This work must also have been

noticed by the postman who emptied my local box and by the delivering postman at the other end, however over the entire 275 days he (the delivering postman) steadfastly chose to refrain from making any reference to the work to the recipients. Lastly of course the work was enjoyed by the recipient and his family. Further, the work mounted on 40 mount boards each of one week's worth of envelopes made an impressive and incidentally visually minimal work in a subsequent exhibition.

Later that year, I produced a whimsical work entitled 'Artwork for customs' whereby with the help of the postmistress I selected a different small and lightweight child's toy each week and enclosed it in an A5 envelope with the inscription 'Artwork for customs' on the docket. These envelopes were sent to my friend in France and latterly returned to me in their entirety by mail (perhaps to my disappointment unopened by customs) to be exhibited as a work in the traditions of Dada and Fluxus.

It wasn't until 1986 that I began writing to Pawel Petasz in Poland, prompted by an old friend who unbeknown to me had been working through the network for several years. He suggested that I exchange my artist's books for his in order to build-up my collection for teaching purposes. The correspondence with Petasz led to my 'East/West Dialogue' with him about the perceived nature of freedom. From the content of his recycled letters I realized that he

wrote to other people but still had not tumbled to the notion of a network. I was however entranced by the visual beauty of his letters and fascinated by the searching correspondence with an artist from the Eastern Block.

In 1988 I was sent a piece of mail-art by a lecturer in another institution who had been prompted by an ex-student of mine and it became evident to me that a network existed. Thanks to the generosity of Robin Crozier (q.v.) I received a long list of networkers and decided to give my 'Pass a parcel' idea another try but this time not trusting to fate and looking to the law of averages for success, I sent out 100 packages (envelopes made from photocopies, on blue cartridge paper, of a page of my passport). I changed the title of the project to 'Is freedom' reflecting both the correspondence with Pawel Petasz and the intended journeys of the packages. The deliberate omission of the question mark left the participants free to make a statement or pose a question. I asked the recipients to inform me when they had received the package and to tell me to whom they had sent it, and to add to or alter it in some way. It was intended that each package should travel for a year by which time it was to be returned to me. In practice this only happened to a small number of them but the project generated an enormous body of work, reaching 185 networkers in 38 countries. At the end of the project the entire work was documented from a computer analysis of

all the destinations. The ensuing two aroused considerable interest, not least to me, I was hooked.

Mail-art has many attraction and the nature of these must vary from person to person. However it must be that the appeal of receiving something in the post is universal, as John Held Jr. said (lecture on mail-art on 28-11-92 at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London), "I am a mail-art junkie, I'm miserable if I don't get any mail". For me it awakens childhood memories of both stamp collecting and the pleasures of 'Post Office Set' with the attendant excitement of its paraphernalia. The pleasure of using a rubber-stamp must relate to some sort of playing at being in a position of authority that clearly remains in adulthood for some of us. Similarly, the tension surrounding the completion of sets of things is also an exciting element. The thrill of receiving anything from a foreign country was not abandoned with childhood, but then neither were the aforementioned pleasures of stamps - both rubber and postage. The complexities and delights of mail-art are manifold and need to be dealt with one at a time in some depth.

AYAH OKWABI

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH AYAH OKWABI (GHANA)

Started on 15-10-1995

Ruud Janssen :Welcome to this mail-interview. First let me ask you the traditional question. When did you get involved in the mail-art network?

Reply on 2-11-1995

Ayah Okwabi :Dear Ruud, thanks for the invitation to participate in your mail-interview project. I got involved in mail art in 1979 when Volker Hamann introduced me to his Anthropological Art Project. AnthroArt was Volker's idea of linking Anthropology to Art. Later I suggested a meeting of

mail artists involved in the AnthroArt network to work on a community-based workcamp project in a village in Ghana. The project was to take place under the auspices of the Voluntary Workcamps Association of Ghana (VOLU) which has been organizing international workcamps in the rural areas of Ghana since 1956.

Volker tried to get as many mail artists as possible to visit Ghana but finally he was the only artist who arrived in the

Summer of 1985 for the project. Ayah Okwabi (AO) and Volker Hamann (VH) met in Accra on 21 July 1985.

The shows in Ghana (the first mail art and correspondence art shows in Black Africa) connected people in different networks such as MAIL ART, THE FOURTH WORLD and as well as different institutions (Ghana Institute of Journalism, Mfantsiman Secondary School, Ghana United Nations Students and Youth Association) plus Volunteers from Europe, U.S.A. and Ghana in a workcamp to construct a school classroom block at Saltpond in the Central region of Ghana.

Some of the contributions for the show were concepts of projects to be realised in Ghana. Although they were among the most attractive contributions, they were inappropriate because of their intellectual nature or needed technical equipment which was unavailable to us (sometimes we had neither electricity nor water) or they were politically inappropriate.

The contributions were presented in different sections - Apartheid, Toko koe Project (where the exhibition was to take place initially but was changed later), peace and politics, mail art publications, mail art, networking addresses and announced shows.

The headmistress of Mfantsiman Secondary School, Mrs. Asiedu, formally declared the exhibition dubbed "Ghana Show" opened. She stressed the role of mail art in promoting international understanding among peoples of

the world. This is particularly important in Ghana where mass media is inadequate and mail is often the only available medium for international correspondence.

At the Ghana United Nations Students and Youth Association convention, the show took on a political meaning because issues of apartheid in South Africa and independence for Namibia, which was by then a colony, were being discussed at the meeting.

Finally VH gave a performance at the Ghana Institute of Journalism in Accra, about new media in relation to journalism. We also visited St Georges Castle in Elmina which was the former centre for the export of Slaves to America.

RJ :How difficult is it to be a mail artist in Ghana?

Reply on 18-11-1995

AO :I have difficulties getting people interested in mail art because of the rising costs of international mail and the fact that there are no financial benefits to be derived by participants from Africa.

Of course the economic situation is tough and one has no alternative but to engage activities that would yield concrete economic benefits. Besides, most post offices that work are concentrated in the urban centres which implies that people who live in the rural areas or villages where postal services are either very slow or non-existent don't

have the possibility to engage in the network. People in my country Ghana find mail art exciting when they understand it. However, it has not been easy to communicate in writing to explain how the network operates in the mass media such as magazines and newspapers. Recently, an article I wrote about 'the Eternal Network' published by Chuck Welch for a weekly newspaper was finally rejected because the editor found it 'difficult to appreciate.'

I started a personal magazine called 'GongGong' in which I published some mail art articles and announcements but financial difficulties compelled me to stop after just two editions. Indeed, the tradition of self-publishing which has contributed to the growth of mail art in Europe and USA is non-existent in Africa.

RJ :Is mail art and networking just a luxury or does it bring something essential?

Reply on 8-12-1995

AO :Mail art brings something interesting for one to do and observe. It opens up possibilities to know and meet artists through networking. When I started mail art with Volker Hamann, I didn't imagine that I would meet him in person but, six years after we started communicating in 1979, we met in Accra in July/August 1985.

On my return visit to Germany, in 1990, I also met Henning Mittendorf. I think the mail art network is able to promote mutual interaction among people over long distances from

diverse cultures which is quite unique. Mail art networking provides a channel for ones creative potential to be realised.

Practising mail art enables one to communicate at a distance with friends who would otherwise be out of touch. Sometimes, mail shatters the isolation I feel here in Accra where I can find few people to share ideas with about the network. Of course, mail art can be described as a luxury because the body does not need it like water or food or air to survive. However, it stimulates the spiritual aspects of the personality and a feeling that we have a community of friends we can always rely on not on the basis of our physical appearance or money but because we share common ideas and interests.

Individuals will come and go but the network lives forever! This means we may lose contact with individual artists but we can always make fresh contacts and make new friends provided we continue staying in touch with the network.

Mail art is a supererogatory activity. Its not absolutely required of the person but is done for the sake of greater artistic perfection.

RJ :Besides the "common ideas and interests", as you say, most mail artists have also their specific ideas about what they want to use the network for, a goal they want to realize. What's yours?

Reply on 2-1-1996

AO :For me, the network is like a mirror in which I can get people to focus on the current issues and challenges facing the world in general and Africa in particular. Some of the themes of my projects in the past, such as "Africa Arise/Food for the hungry" provide concrete examples.

"Africa Arise"

focused on the issue of apartheid in South Africa and how it can be eradicated. "Food for the hungry" addressed the food problem which is still a problem in some African countries either because of poor weather conditions, civil war or ineffective government policies.

"Population" has also been a theme of one of my projects because the issue of a rapidly growing population and how to provide for the needs of more people is a burning issue that faces many African States today. My latest project with the theme "End Racism/Ethnic hatred" is a problem that has global dimensions. What can we do as mail artists to change the thinking of racists?

I feel a personal responsibility to promote awareness of the challenges, or social problems that people face. Once the necessary awareness has been created, we can begin to think of possible solutions.

In addition, the network serves as a channel for exchanging visits with fellow mail artists scattered around the globe. After making contact via surface mail or other media, my ultimate aim is to meet in person with artists in my sub-network and get to know them better. I am aware as an African artist of the expense of travelling by air to Europe or U.S.A. or South America but it is one dream that I

cherish very much. I hope that I would be able to meet in person with you in the near future.

RJ :Well, that is something the future will tell. I'm sure it will be interesting to meet for both of us, but for now the questions and answers have to travel by mail. A new thing in networking and communication is the use of e-mail. Although in the USA and Europe already lots of people use the internet, this communication-form isn't that common or even available in Africa. Because some networkers now start to focus more and more on this new 'gadget' this might mean more isolation for Africa. What do you think?

(With my next question I also sent Ayah some articles about my experiences and thoughts in connection to telecommunication and internet).

Reply on 19-1-1996

AO :Basically, computers are beyond the means of the average person in my country, Ghana. Besides, even when one has a computer it costs 100 dollars a month to have access to internet which means that it is only companies who make a good profit can afford this facility. Given that mail art and money do not mix, it would be impossible for me to get on the internet.

The increasing isolation of Africa as a result of the emergence of the information superhighway has been the topic of so me conferences held by infomation experts here

in Africa. The so-called information revolution is only being experienced in isolated pockets in Ghana.

Regarding telecommunication, I hardly use the telephone for mail art. The only time I received a call from abroad was when Chuck Welch called me from the United States in relation to the mail art Anthology known as "The Eternal Network."

I get the feeling from the number of calls you have on e-mail that I must be missing a lot of the action going on in the internet, I send and receive only surface mail for now. Sometimes the quality of surface mail I received is unsatisfactory. Some mail artists simply send you a black and white Xerox with a line of greeting which sounds rather shallow. Meanwhile, I wonder how you are able to finance your huge financial bill using the internet and sending out 100 or 150 pieces of mail a month?

RJ :Ah, a question for me? Actually the e-mail isn't that costly here in Holland if you know the ways. I teach informatics, and the e-mail address I have is a free one. I don't have to pay for anything else than the phone costs, and therefore I can easily send out 10 large e-mails for the same costs as a simple air-mail letter to the United States or so. As for financing 100 to 150 pieces of mail each month, I do have a paid job besides all my art activities, live relatively small (and therefore cheap) and don't have a family to feed. I hope this answers your question a bit. I guess that the money one can spend on the mail one sends out, depends also on the country one lives in. With the minimal month-salary here in Holland one can

send out about 1500 letters abroad (if one didn't need money to live and eat that is.....). So actually I don't spend that much on mail most of the time. How is the situation in Ghana? How are the postal costs in regard to the average month-salary, and do the living-costs allow people to even spend money on mail (art). I guess here lies a good reason why there are so little mail artists in Africa. Am I right?

Reply on 16-2-1996

AO :Regarding the postage expenses the situation here is quite different. Most people spend more than 50% of their income on basic needs such as food and then rent and bringing up their family takes up the rest. On the average salary of 100,000 cedis one can send about 330 letters to Europe from here in a month. Given that there are hardly any mail artists in Africa who are really actively engaged, most of my correspondence is with Euro peans, Americans or Latin Americans. Letters to the Americas are more expensive.

It is true that because of difficult economic circumstances, most people here cannot afford to send mail (art) just for the fun of it. People send mail for concrete benefits and consider mail art fanciful and not worth spending time on. I have no family yet and stay with my parents so I can manage to send mail art but not as much as I would like to.

RJ :I have noticed that especially in rich countries, the mail artists tend to send out sometimes quite strange things. The quality of the mail seems to get less, and the quantity gets larger. It results in chain-letters, add-to xeroxes, or just

large quantities of xeroxes. This kind of mail art you probably also received. What do you think of them?

Reply on 12-3-1996

AO :Chain-letters, add-to xeroxes or just large quantities of xeroxes are simply boring and unimpressive. They reveal absolutely nothing about the interests or motivations of the senders. Most of the contributions I have received for my "End Racism/Ethnic Hatred Show," are of this type. Just imagine having the obligation to prepare a catalogue about an exhibition to be organized for this project and sending it in exchange to people who simply cut some pages from a magazine or send an irrelevant black and white xerox as a contribution to a show! Mail art coming from industrialised, rich countries needs to be of a high standard and a good example to encourage more people in Ghana and Africa in general to participate in the network.

RJ :Of course the mail artists living in a rich country don't have to be rich. But I understand the difference all too well. The xerox here in Holland is something very cheap, it costs only 10 cents (10% of the postage costs of a letter air-mail inside Europe). Also you can get free postcards at many places with some kind of advertising on it, so something like that here is even free. I guess the reason some mail artists send such things to certain mail art shows is just that "they want to be included" and hope for a nice catalog. They don't always realize that by sending poor quality, the organizer of the mail art show isn't that much encouraged to make a good documentation, and this is some kind of vicious circle that makes the documentations of the last

years I am in mail art quite poor (with some wonderful exceptions of course of mail artists who have found good sponsors). How important is the documentation of a mail art project in your eyes?

Reply on 30-3-1996

AO :Documentation has to be done in a detailed way to make it interesting. To do so one must have received good quality mail art. It is easy to send a ready made black and white xerox or postcard to a show. However, when one gets a reasoned response one is inspired or motivated to give back documentation that senders are happy to receive.

A catalogue with texts, articles, photos and listings takes time and money to prepare. Stuff that is ready at hand and quick to send is hardly the right material. Documentation promotes fresh contacts and networking among artists in the mail art (network). This enables us to prepare organized information on mail art to show people who know nothing about mail art.

The question is how do you finance it? For me even after production of the documentation, the fact that most mail artists are in EUROPE or AMERICA means additional mailing expenses. One way out is robbing Peter to pay Paul or make the money elsewhere and use it to finance networking.

RJ :Yes, most mail artists live in Europe of America. As a person living in Europe I see the difference in mail art

between the mail I receive from outside Europe compared to the mail I get from inside Europe. Do you notice any difference too or is it just my perception?

Reply on 15-4-1996

AO :There is a great deal of difference between mail art from Africa in relation to what comes from Europe or America regarding technology. Snail mail, the handmade and handwriting is typical for mail art from Africa. E-mail, Fax or computers are available here, but these are mostly owned by institutions and individuals who do not understand mail art. It is easy for me to gain access to a friends computer if I use it to publish books which I sell and pay back something for using the computer, but he would consider it a waste of time and electricity if I use the computer to prepare documentation for a mail art project which brings no money to his pocket. Often I get no response when I try to contact mail art addresses in Africa which are very few indeed!

RJ :Is there also a difference from the mail art you receive from Europe compared to mail art from America?

Reply on 9-5-1996

AO :It is really difficult to make a clear distinction between European and American mail art. Both regions make use of high technology equipment more often. However it would appear that I receive more mail art magazines/publications from the United States than Europe. Also, generally, it is easier for me to decode handwriting from Europe than

from the U.S. My favorite correspondents can be found on both continents.

Mail artists are best assessed on the basis of individual quality of their work. The only softcopy material in the form of three recorded cassettes of radio programmes about the history of Indians and the coming of colonialists and settlers to the United States for my "End Racism / Ethnic hatred" project came from San Francisco in California. This contribution displays a clear understanding of the subject of racism in one part of the world which has revealed new things about the history of the United States to me.

RJ :The history in connection to mail art is also interesting. The last years a lot has been written on the subject of mail art. Do you think is is important for mail artist to know about their roots?

(Ayah sent in a print of his rubberstamp "Global Better Life", and it was the first rubber stamp print I received from Ghana. It is the 69th country from where I received contributions to the TAM Rubberstamp Archive. As a thanks I sent Ayah the newest infoletter about the archive and also the newest published interview)

Reply on 30-5-1996

(Between the sending of the previous question and the receiving of Ayah's answer the city Accra was in the news because of the refugees from Liberia who fled from Liberia on a large boat and were stranded in the harbor of Accra, Ghana).

AO :The publications you sent were quite revealing. The TAM Rubber Stamp Archive is much larger then I thought. I was impressed to hear about Rubber Stamp companies as participants in your project. Can you please send info about some rubber stamp companies?

To your question. Much has been written about mail art. So doing a project that reminds us of our roots brings meaning into the action. I look around me and to my personal experience to get themes for my projects. However, your roots alone should not always be the basis for the themes you chose for projects. There are several topics for mail art projects that may have absolutely nothing to do with where we come from.

Imagination and creativity play quite an important role in the network. This explains the great variety of themes and artistic projects in the network.

RJ :Accra was on the news.... how are things there? The first rubber stamp from Ghana for the Archive came from you (thank you!). How easy or difficult was it for you to get this stamp made and what is "Global Better Life"?

Reply on 28-6-1996

(Together with his new answer Ayah sent me the originals of his END RACISM / ETHNIC HATRED which I will print through TAM-Publications)

AO :The arrival of a Nigerian freighter, Bulk challenge at the Ghanaian port of Takoradi on May 14th with 3,000 Liberian refugees fleeing factional fighting among the war lords underlines the relevance of the theme of my current project, "End Racism / Ethnic Hatred". Earlier on the refugees had been refused entry by the Cote d'Ivoire authorities which illustrates the fact that the idea of political asylum has come under increasing strain in both the developed and developing world. Already 750,000 Liberians have fled their country as a result of the six-year old civil war which has been the result of ethnic hatred among Librerians. Ethnic conflicts should be the concern of all because their consequences are bound to affect outsiders one way or the other.

For example, many soldiers from Ghana and other West African countries have lost their lives in peacekeeping duties in Liberia. Also, the Ghanaian government and people have been making sacrifices to contain several Liberia refugees who have entered the country.

Global Better Life is an organisation whose main objective is to bring about a better life for all before the end of the century. I have registered the organization with the registrar General's Department as a publishing, advertising and public relations company. In mail art I am using Global Better Life as a pseudonym or name which I can use in the network in addition to my normal identity. I have been fascinated by the use of names in mail art like ANTHROART by Volker Hamann, POSTAL ART NETWORK (PAN) or TAM.

It was not easy to get a rubber stamp because I don't have the ability or the materials to make one. I designed one which was made for me at about SIX thousand cedis or approxi-mately five United States dollars. That is quite a lot of money in local terms.

RJ :In your catalogue of your project "End Racism/Ethnic Hatred", I read that you already arranged two exhibitions with the contributions. How were the reactions?

Reply on 27-7-1996

AO :Most visitors to the two exhibitions who were mostly young people found the contributions really fascinating and would like to participate in the network. One lady wanted to know how she was going to finance video or audio cassettes that she would like to send artists in other parts of the world. People wanted to know how the network operates. I tried to explain but some did not really understand. Indeed, it is not easy to explain mail art to some beginners.

Above all, the atmosphere at the exhibition was businesslike but detached some of the comments were: "does this postcard reflect the theme of the exhibition or is it just an artwork?" or "Oh, thats an appropriate description!" And so on.

(Again Africa is in the news with the Coup that has taken place in Burundi).

RJ :Well, I guess it is time to end this interview now. Maybe I forgot to ask you something?

reply on 23-8-1996

AO :My comment on the recent coup in Burundi, where a Tutsi by name Major Pierre Buyoya, former head of State has taken over from Sylvester Ntinbantunganya, a Hutu, underlines the fact that the competition between the two ethnic groups, comprising Hutu's and Tutsi's is going to continue for some time. That is really a pity. Sanctions are now being applied against the new regime to return the country to democracy. Time will tell whether this approach will be successful.

Well, all good things have an end. I think it has been a great honour and privilege having this conversation with you. Your effort to create a bridge between Africa and the global mail art network is surely commendable. Keep it up. With warm greetings, Ayah.

RJ :I want to thank you too for your time and energy during this interview Ayah. I sure hope that more Europeans and Americans realize that the world is a bit larger than ones own continent, and that we all live on the same planet. My best wishes to you too, and we'll sure keep in contact!

The MAIL INTERVIEW newsletter

(Original Newsletter as published in 2001 to document this long-time project)

Exploring MAIL ART and the new ways of communication:



The MAIL INTERVIEW project.

The Mail Interview project started in 1994. This is the newsletter that explains the History, the process, and to be short all important aspects of the project.

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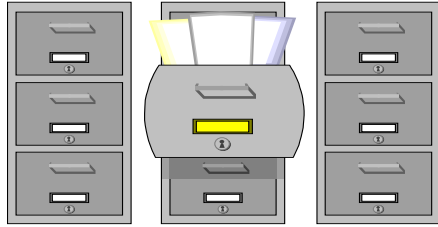
The MAIL-INTERVIEW project

This Mail-Interview project in fact is the investigation, to find out why others do MAIL ART, how they started and how the new communication-forms affect the way the mail artists work. This newsletter is updated several times a year, so the text is changed when something new happens with the project.

The history of the project

The Mail Interview project started in October 1994. I remember reading a copy of an interview published in the magazine ND, and was very interested in the story the mail artists were telling. Only a few hours later I decided to start some interviews myself. Not in the traditional way...

The interviews I wanted to do should go by mail, but since this isn't the only way the mail artists communicate, I



extended the idea and would allow all possible communication forms for the process. The fun would be that there are no rules for this. I send out the first question, and choose my communication-form, and the receiver can decide for himself/herself, which form to choose for the answer.

A nice example of how this can go is the interview with Peter Küstermann from Germany. He called me and gave a verbal first answer. I recorded the answer, transcribed it and sent the answer with the next question to him. He stated to me that he wanted to use as much as possible the different communication-forms, but as it is now he hasn't replied to the last question for a long time.

The process of the interviews has changed over the years. At first I made one series of 12 people I wanted to interview. But as time passes by and sometimes the answers came only in after long times, there grew a series of interviews. At the moment the seventh series is

underway and none of the series are completely finished yet today (1998).

After starting up the first interviews there soon came the moment when to decide what to do with the finished interviews. To keep track of all the words that come in and go out, I have typed all these questions and answers into my computer. Once the interview is ready it is only a simple task to print the final texts. But here I developed the principle to send the complete text to the interviewed artist, and to ask him/her to proofread. The first interview to get ready was Michael Leigh's interview, and after receiving his reactions, I made a booklet out of the interview in a small edition and sent it to some of the other mail artists I was interviewing. That was the start of the booklets, with as a reaction that: more mail artists wanted to read the interviews and asked for the booklets.

The publishing of this first booklet reminded me of the fact that it was the beginning of a larger series, so the cost factor was involved. Not only the interviewed artists would be interested in the interviews, in fact the whole mail art network would like to read them. These factors lead to the situation in which it is now. A large series of interview booklets have been published and people are able to subscribe to the series. Because not everybody has the money to subscribe I looked for another way to make the

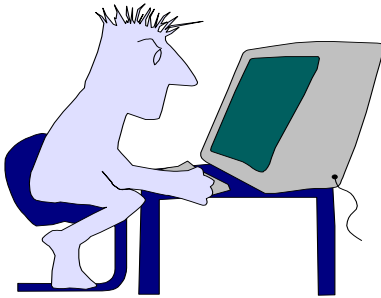
texts available, and that lead to publishing the texts on the Internet (thanks to the help of Jas W. Felter in Canada)

Publishing of Interviews

After the first published booklet, things went very fast. Today's over 36 booklets have been published and more will come out in the future. The publishing of the booklets is a process on its own. The first were a bit primitive, but gradually I invested more time to do the layout and to make them look better. In 1997 I even started with the making of colour-versions for the interviewed artist, and also sometimes others take over the publishing of the booklet-version.

Vittore Baroni published his interview as a special edition of ARTE POSTALE! , and the interviews with Tim Mancusi & Guy Bleus will be published by The Sticker Dude (Joel) in New York , USA. As time passes by more experiments will be undertaken. To give you an idea, the upcoming interview with Jonathan Stangroom will contain in it a specially made copy-art work by Jonathan himself.

Publishing on the WWW



One of the communication-forms I was interested in is the electronic form. Since I work a lot with computers, I started to use the Internet as well end of 1994. This meant I could send and receive e-mail messages as well. How

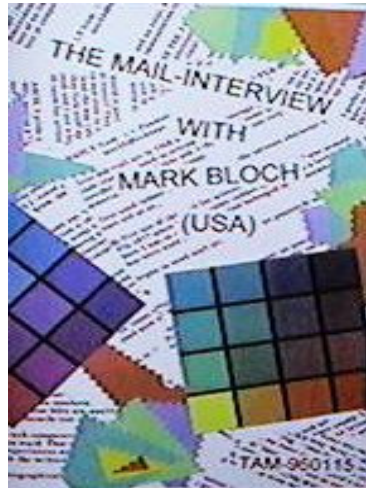
to arrange a Web-Site was then still unknown to me. Jas W. Felter from Canada was already experimenting in that field and I asked him for help. He then offered to publish the interviews in his Museum-Library, and after experimenting with the sending of complete interview-files, he transformed them into HTML-documents for me and put them online.

Changes in 1996. Thanks to Joy McManus (USA) I got the address of Geocities in Los Angeles, and Joy even arranged the site for me. This free space I started to fill since June 1996, and my learning of HTML-language started. I built up the site in steps, but only as a kind of medium between all the texts that I have produced. The interviews are still put online by Jas W. Felter, who I owe a great THANK YOU for all the work he has done for me. Thanks to this

publishing online, the interview became accessible for everybody.

Subscribing to the Interviews

Unlike what most people might think, there are only very few subscribers to the mail interview booklets. At this moment only 8 subscribers and most of them are subscribers for a long time. Bruno Sourdin from France is the one who subscribed for a very long time. Sometimes I get those letters, mail artists asking for all the interviews, and they don't realise what kinds of costs are involved.



The latest subscriber is the Library of the MoMa (Museum of Modern Art in New York). They already received the complete set of the interview-booklets (since I think it is important that the information is available in these kind of institutions as well). Their reaction was that they wanted to subscribe to

the upcoming issues. Subscribing to the interviews means you get the booklet-versions, always the extended versions. Sometimes there are special things that belong to the interview, and when you order back-issues you are never sure if you'll get it complete. I mostly make limited editions (like 70 or 50 copies) , and once they are gone, I only can send you the print-out of the text. The costs of subscribing is at the moment US\$ 3,-- inside Europe. Outside Europe it costs US\$ 4,-- This only covers the real costs since I don't make any profit out of this project at all (in fact each interview probably costs me several hundreds of dollars!). If you want to order older issues, please ask for the form I made for this. Due to the limited edition I normally print I only have a limited amount of booklets available and sometimes certain issues are already sold out. This printing out of the text is something everybody could do since these texts are put online as well. Ask anybody you know who has access to the interviews, and he can find all at:

<http://www.iuoma.org/>

On this site you have access also the other things I have done, like the newsletter of the TAM Rubber Stamp archive, the 'thoughts about mail-art' texts, the ' secret thoughts about mail-art' series, and even a copy of this newsletter. Also information about the IUOMA, texts from other mail-artists and links to several other sites connected to mail-art.

Overview

Over the years lots of interviews are published. In previous newsletters you can find the overviews of the publications. In 1995 I used to do two different versions. One was just the plain text, and a special edition was made including illustrations. For these illustrations I used the artefacts that I gathered during the interview-process. This might include enveloped, copies of FAX-messages, e-mails, etc.

What happened after these first interviews is that people suggested that I should interview myself. A silly proposal in my eyes, as if I would know which questions to ask myself. I then told the ones who asked such a

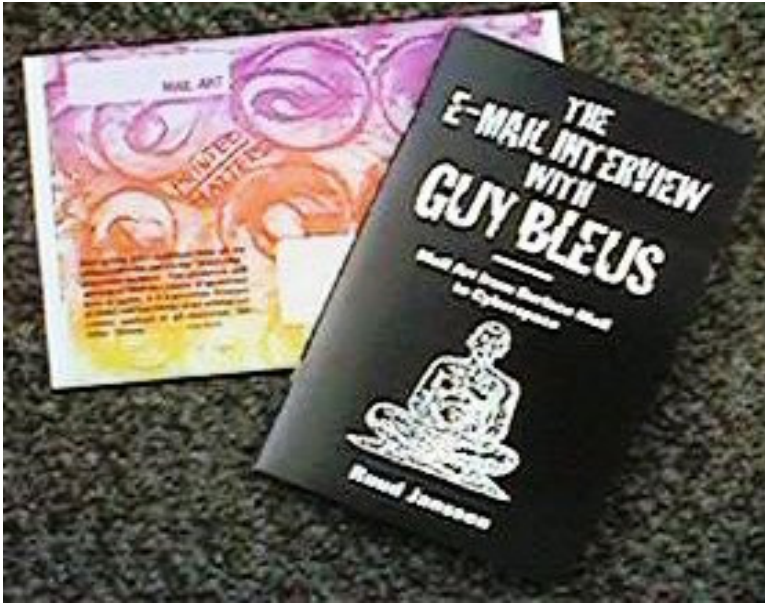


question to start an interview on their own which I would include in the series. As you can see in the next year those interviews came out as well.

The interview with Ray Johnson is a story on its own. I never expected that he would reply to my mail, but strange enough he instantly replied to the first question. Typical

Ray, but he answered in his own unique way. On the invitation there is the text that one could answer in any length one would like. Ray wrote on the invitation the length of the diagonal of the A4 paper I sent to him and asked for the next question. Sadly enough the third question I sent to Ray never got answered. On January 13th he committed suicide in New York.

For the year 1998 some more interviews are already scheduled. Although some of the booklets of 1997 still have to be published, the process of finishing the interviews is sometimes not in my hands. The simultaneous aspect of the interviews causes that. One of the interviews that ended was with Edgardo Antonio Vigo. I sent him the 'traditional' last question in which I ask if there is nothing I forget to ask. A way to give the interviewed artist a chance to say whatever he wants. In Edgardo's case, the answer never came because he died end of 1997. Another sad detail is that the interview I did with Dick Higgins (USA) was one of his last ones. He died last November 1998 in Canada. Also Norman Solomon died before I was able to conclude the interview. It seems he was seriously ill and his wife informed me after his death that Norman explained her he wished the interview would be published anyway.



A careful reader will notice that there is again an interview published with John Held Jr. The reason for that is quite simple. The first part of his interview was done while he was in Dallas. The last mail he sent from there was for the interview, and he moved to San Francisco. I even met him there, where he was working for the Stamp Art Gallery together with Bill Gaglione (the Gallery stopped to exist end of 1997...!) And the second part of the interview explains what happened in San Francisco. Also the interview with Litsa Spathi will be published in parts. The first one is textual (and in German language). The second part will be a visual one (as an experiment I will try to publish the visual part on the Internet as well).

At the moment I am far behind with the printing of the interview-booklets. Some interviews are finished and already published on the Internet, but the booklets still have to be printed. Also some interviews are waiting to be continued. After 3 years of this intensive work I am taking a break. Soon I hope to continue with this work, and already some interviews are started again. The name of the people whose interview is now in progress is still not published. I send out these papers in which people can suggest others to be interviewed. This on its own is a project too. Some mail artists suggest themselves, while others make good suggestions and mention a reason as well. I plan to publish these papers as well, but there is only that much a single person can do.

Future Plans with the Interviews

Lots of ideas for the future, but I will see what is possible. It is always a matter of time, money, and possibilities. But I will give you an idea of the plans:

First plan is to publish a book with most of the interviews. Problem is to find a publisher. Since the first priority was to get the interviews read by others, the texts are already published on the Internet, so the final book has not first

priority. The whole process of the interviews has produced a lot of artefacts also, and that would make a nice documentation.

Second plan is to exhibit the complete artefacts the mail interviews brought to me. All the mail, letters, envelopes, enclosures to the answers, it is enough to fill a museum. Guy Bleus already exhibited the booklets end of 1997. All booklets that got published in 1996 and 1997 were exhibited at his E-mail art space in Hasselt. Maybe when the complete project is finished I could interest the Postal Museums for this. They are faced with the changing world of communication as well, and most Postal Museums have shown interest in mail art the last years. They might even help in getting this first plan realised. Through my internet-site I already got an invitation from the Queens Library Gallery in New York to send in some work for their upcoming exhibition about "Fluxus, Mail-Art and Net.works". No surprises since all three aspects come out clearly in my project. The recently purchased book "Fluxus Codex" (by Hendricks, published by Abrams, easy to order through Amazon.com electronic bookshop), shows clearly how Fluxus and Mail-Art are connected. Also I did interview some Fluxus-Artists, and some interviews that are in progress have some nice and funny connections.

Third plan is to translate the interviews into other languages. Some are already available in Spanish (online

and hardcopy by P.O.Box in Barcelona), and soon they might be available in Italian and Russian too (I have given permission to translate and publish some interviews in that language). There are also interviews in progress in the German language, and who knows I might find time to translate some of them into Dutch. The first interview in German that got finished was with Litsa Spathi from Heidelberg (Germany), and three more interviews are in progress in this language. As a Dutchman I learned three foreign languages at school, so I know the language quite well, an advantage) But for the time being I will have to find time first to continue the time-costing process of doing the interviews. The mail-artists that sometimes write me don't understand the work that is involved in the process of one interview. The retyping of all the texts, the cost of the mail , the time it takes to understand the way the interview is going and to see to it that the interview shows what the hell mail art is all about. Last problem is always to get the finished interview ready to be read by others. Correcting the text, and getting it published (on the WWW and the booklets).

As told before, at the moment I have taken a break with the interviews. Because of some changes in my life (like a new job and new interests in art) I have stopped the process for a while. It is my aim to continue and complete the project. To publish the last set of interviews that are underway. People who subscribed to the interviews and already have

sent in money don't have to worry. They will get their copies eventually, or will get their money back. If someone wants to subscribe to the future-issues, that is possible as well. But I am not doing this project to earn money, nor is anyone doing mail-art to get rich....

Please copy and publish this text if you want. I only will send out a limited number of copies into the mail art network.

Ruud Janssen - TAM

APPENDIX-1

(Overview some historical dates – published in 2001)

October 1994: Start of the mail-interview project

1995: The first hard-copy versions of the interviews hit the network and the possibility of subscriptions.

June 1996: The first texts are put on the internet. With the help of Jas W. Felter (Canada) a virtual library is built at his site. On my own site more background information about my many activities are accessible and links to other mail art related information are made.

October 1996: Meeting with several people I am interviewing / have interviewed, in California , USA , while I was there for the exhibition of the TAM Rubber Stamp Archive at the Stamp Art Gallery

- December 1997: Exhibition of the Mail-Interview project and some of my mail-art at the Cultural Center in Hasselt, Belgium , organized by Guy Bleus.
- 1998: A break in the process of the interviews because of other activities & change of job. The Sticker Dude (USA) publishes interviews in a professional way (Guy Bleus & Tim Mancusi) , And P.O. Box (Spain) published Spanish translations of Interviews with Clemente Padin and Edgardo Antonio Vigo. Also the first interview in German language appears (Litsa Spathi)
- 1999: The mail-interview project is part of an exhibition in New York (USA) at the Queens Library Gallery called: "Fluxus, Mail-Art and Net.works" (January/March 1999). First visual interview is published on the Internet.
- 2000: Interviews that got finished in 2000 or later are only published on the

internet. No booklets are published yet.

2001:

To end up the mail-interview project all unfinished interviews are gradually being published on the Internet. Preparation of a book with these last sets of interviews and a selection of previously published interviews is researched.

Dec 2001:

All unfinished interviews are published at www.iuoma.org and this newsletter is published.

APPENDIX-2

(Overview of Archives the interviews are available in)

1. Sackner Archives - Florida - USA.
2. Museum of Modern Art Library - New York - USA.
3. TAM-Archive - Breda - Netherlands.
4. Modern Realism Archive - San Francisco - USA.
5. HeMi-Archive - Frankfurt/Main - Germany.
6. Administration Centre - Wellen - Belgium.
7. Perneczky Archive - Köln - Germany.
8. Spillkammeret Collection - Denmark.
9. Artpool Research Center - Hungary.
10. EON - Archive - Via Reggio - Italy.
11. The Museum Of Communication - Bern - Switzerland.
12. Nobody Press Collection - Heidelberg - Germany.
13. JCM - The Museum Library - Canada.
14. Signal Review Archive - Beograd - Yugoslavia.
15. National Centre For Contemporary Art - Kalingrad - Russia.
16. Staatliches Museum Schwerin - Schwerin - Germany.
17. Museum für Post und Kommunikation - Berlin - Germany.
18. Banana Mail-Art Archive - Sechelt - Canada.
19. Clemente Padin Archive - Montevideo - Uruguay.
20. Eternal Network Archive (Chuck Wlesh) - Hanover - USA.
21. R.A.T. Mail-Art Archive - Liege - Belgium.
22. Günther Ruch's Archive - Genève - Switzerland.
23. VEC Archive - Maastricht - Netherlands.
24. Documenta Archive – Kassel – Germany.

NB. Not every archive has the complete collection, but the mentioned sources have mostly about 20 or more interviews in their collection. The JCM - Collection has them in digital form online.

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