

The MAIL-INTERVIEW project
by Ruud Janssen – Netherlands

A 5th compilation of some mail-interviews

After the first four volumes (Mail-Interviews Part 1 till Part 4) and the publication of Interview Mail-Artists did with me, this is the sixth publication with 7 more mail-interviews and a reprint of the last newsletter.

Some interviews ended because there never came a reply to a last question. But there are also the visual interviews that never got published. In this publication I focus on the visual aspect on Mail-Interviews as well and include some reprints of booklet covers.

4th version – including two more interviews

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This 5th 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.

Contact-address:

TAM-Publications
P.O.Box 1055
4801 BB Breda
the NETHERLANDS

e-mail : r.janssen@iuoma.org

URL : www.iuoma.org

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INTRODUCTION

After the first publications with 16, 12, 10 and 21 mail-interviews here is a fifth collection. They haven't been published before.

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 in this book is higher than usual because of the reprint of covers.

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.

OVERVIEW ALL INTERVIEWS STARTED

There were many mail-interviews started over the years. In the newsletters I sent out in those years I didn't always mention the names of the people I was interviewing or tried to interview.

Here is a first overview of all the interviews that took place simultaneously. It shows how complex the information flows were and gives you a glimpse of who actually were all involved.

In the books that are previously published you can actually read the results in text form. The mail, envelopes and visual works that the artists included were only partly used in the first publications of booklets. The originals are still in the TAM-Archive and are sometimes used for exhibitions.

The list you see now show which interviews took place and when they were ended. Some ended with a booklet publication, some just ended without publication and most mail-interviews are available on the Internet. Only 2 interviews are not published by request of the interviewed artist.

1 - Completed and Published 1995

Name	country
Michael Leigh	England
Klaus Groh	Germany
Arto Posto	USA
Michael Lumb	England
Rod Summers	Netherlands
Henning Mittendorf	Germany
Dobrica Kamperelic	Yugoslavia
Chuck Welch	USA
Robin Crozier	England
Anna Banana	Canada
John Held Jr. (Part-1 – DALLAS)	USA
Carlo Pittore	USA
Jenny de Groot	Netherlands

TABEL 1 : Overview of the first mail-interviews that were published in 1995. It wasn't the original plan, but after the first interview got ready the idea of booklets and subscribers came about. That is how things got started.

2 - Completed and Published 1996

Name	country
Svjetlana Mimica	Croatia
Ken Friedman	Norway
Dick Higgins	USA
Ashley Parker Owens	USA
Clemente Padin	Uruguay
Mark Bloch	USA
Mark Greenfield	England
John M. Bennett	USA
Patricia Collins	England
Ray Johnson	USA
Jenny Soup	USA
E.F. Higgins	USA
Robert Rocola *	USA
Rudi Rubberoid	USA
Andrej Tisma	Yugoslavia
Vittore Baroni	Italy
Ayah Okwabi	Ghana

TABEL 2 : Overview of the interviews published in 1996 (Marked with * means booklet did not get published but eventually got published online)

3 - Completed and Published 1997

Name	country
Julie Hagan Bloch	USA
Julie Paquette	USA
Michael B. Corbett	USA
Ruud Janssen (by Mark Greenfield)	Netherlands
Günther Ruch	Switzerland
Ruud Janssen (by Carol Stetser)	Netherlands
Carol Stetser	USA
Ibirico	Spain
Jürgen O. Olbrich *	Germany
Tim Mancusi * ##	USA

TABEL 3 : Overview of the interviews published in 1997 (Marked with * means that the booklet is not published in booklet form , marked with ## means that the booklet was supposed to be printed by The Sticker Dude – NY – end of 1999, but he only managed publishing one issue, the mail-interview with Guy Bleus. The edition of that booklet was about 4.000)

4 - Completed and Published 1998

Name	country
Edgardo Antonio Vigo *	Argentina
Jonathan Stangroom *#	USA
John Held Jr (Part-2 San Francisco) *	USA
Guy Bleus ##	Belgium
Litsa Spathi * #G (Part-1)	Germany
Litsa Spathi #G (Part-2)	Germany

TABEL 4 : Overview of the interviews scheduled to be published in 1998 (Marked with * means booklet not published yet) (Marked with ## means that the booklet is being printed by The Sticker Dude – NY – end of 1998. Marked with #G means that the interview is done in the German language. Part-1 Text , Part-2 Visual. The textual part was published in March 2001 and removed after being 12 days online at request of Litsa Spathi. Marked with *# means the interview got broken up and was only published in 2001 because of last question)

5 - Completed and Published 1999

Name	country
Anna Boschi *	Italy
José van den Broucke *	Belgium
Roy Arenella *	USA
Mike Dyar *	USA
Norman Solomon *	USA

TABEL 5 : Overview of the interviews scheduled to be published in 1999 (Marked with * means booklet did not get published as booklet. Interviews appear on the Internet as soon as they are finished!)

6 - Completed and Published 2000

In this year the mail-interview project was being closed slowly. Interviews that were stopped because the communication has dried up, or because live lead people in other directions.

The interviews that were unfinished eventually all were published too on the Internet. The site by Jas W. Felter, and my own site are the places where all interview eventually arrived.

Name	country
Clive Phillpot *	UK
Ruggero Maggi *	Italy
Ko de Jonge*	Netherlands
Marie Stilkind*	USA
Patricia Tavenner*	USA
Judith A.Hoffberg*	USA
H.R. Fricker*	Switzerland
Raphael Nadolny*	Poland
Rea Nikonova*	Russia
Birger Jesch*	Germany
Daniel Plunkett*	USA
Keith Bates*	England
Bern Porter*	USA
Peter Küstermann*	Germany
Steve Perkins*	USA
John Evans*	USA
Julia Tant*	England

TABEL 6 : Overview of the interviews scheduled to be published in 2000 and later. (* means booklet did not get published)

7 - Completed and Published 2001 - FAKE

Name	country
Dan Landrum	USA
K. Frank Jensen	Denmark
Pina Artasmurdo (Partisan D'Amour) #	Albania
The Unexpected #	Netherlands

TABEL 7 : Overview of the FAKE mail-interviews that got published over the years. Some Mail-Artists just published a booklet with their own interview. Also a few fictive names appeared in the series. It is never revealed who were the real identities of the persons marked with an #

8 - Completed and Published till 2007

Name	country
Alisson Knowles	USA
Bill Willson **	USA
Ben Vautier **	France

TABEL 8 : A last set of interviews I tried to do (** means that the interview never really got started. There was a dialogue, but never an exchange of questions and answers).

In the previous books the covers of the original publications were never reprinted. In this final book about the Mail-Interview some of the covers are reprinted again. The first sample is of the interview with John M. Bennett. These covers are mostly collages made on A3 format and then reduced to A4 size.

JOHN M. BENNETT

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH JOHN M. BENNETT (USA)

Started on: 4-7-1995

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 27-7-1995

John M. Bennett: I got involved in mail art about the age of 8, in 1951, crossing the pacific on a ship from Japan to Oregon. I wrapped up little messages and drawings in many layers of tape and paper and tossed 'em overboard. After that my career went into a kind of lull, except for a brief period of sending poems I'd written to girls when I was in high school, until about 1974 when I started doing mail art at the instigation of a friend, the now-deceased painter Mr. Sensitive. It was great fun and still is. One of the earliest issues of LOST AND FOUND TIMES was a mail art project (copy is enclosed). Mail art delights continue to make their way into its pages.

RJ : Is it possible to describe what is so delightful about mail-art?

Reply on 9-8-1995

JMB: What's delightful about receiving mail art is that it's so full of people's uninhibited expressions, off-the-cuff blurtings, or careful, lunatic constructions. It's about as close as one can get these days to a "pure" art, one with no agenda, no career-building motives, etc. (This doesn't mean it doesn't have political or social messages - it often, even usually, does - but the functionality of that is impersonal).

Anyway, receiving mail art stimulates my own creative processes - it's a source of contact with other artists which is most welcome to someone who lives a fairly routine life in a relative cultural desert.

What I like about making mail art is that it's a medium in which I can either distribute my main work, poetry, and/or do completely spontaneous things that often surprise me and serve as a source of ideas for other projects. Do it, and put a stamp on it! What joy!

RJ : What joy! Is mail art only something positive to you? are there any negative sides to it too maybe?

Reply on 19-8-1995

JMB: Well, yes; I can't bear throwing the stuff out, so I keep filling up these boxes I then have to move around and deal with. (Pile up around the bed, block the narrow aisles in my office, stumble over....) Fortunately, however, there are a couple of libraries who collect the stuff, so every so often I seal 'em up and ship 'em off,

so long as they pay for the shipping, which they usually do.

Basically, if I didn't enjoy doing it, I wouldn't do it. I do find the rising postage rates distressing, though.

RJ : Like me, you probably get lots of mail art with invitations to projects, chain-letters, add-to projects, etc. Do you reply to all of those or do you select what you answer?

Reply on 2-9-1995

JMB: The add-to projects are among my favorites - little "brain cells" scurrying around the world acquiring more and more memory as they go. Those always get my full attention. I do reply to most of the project invitations. Some are more interesting than others, of course; though sometimes the truly dumb ones are an irresistible invitation to do something really nasty, eh?

Chain letters, however, are a different matter: I rarely respond to them at all, though I suppose my act of breaking the chain is a response of a kind. I don't like doing mass mailings (I get enough of that sending out LOST AND FOUND TIMES when it's published) and chain letters seem like I'm doing someone else's mass mailing. Many years ago I responded to a few of them, but rarely got anything back - so I think there must be a lot of other chain breakers out there, bless their hearts.

RJ: Thank you, I am one of those collector of chain letters and today my collection is over 700..... You mention 'LOST AND FOUND TIMES'. What is this publication about?

Reply on 18-9-1995

JMB: LOST AND FOUND TIMES is an avant-garde literary magazine (I'm sending you a copy via surface), that includes the occasional bit of mail art. It began in 1975 as a single-sheet publication of fake lost-and-found notices that was stuck under car windshields in parking lots. The first issues included notices by people we knew in the mail art network. When the other editor died suddenly in 1978 (Doug Landies or Mr. Sensitive) I continued to publish it, gradually expanding its literary aspect. It's rather fat now, gets around a lot, and is collected in numerous major institutions, etc.

RJ : Are you a collector too? Do you keep all the things you don't recycle?

Reply on 30-9-1995

JMB: I collect: skull rings, skulls in general, little cars, feathers, rocks, hot peppers, olive oil cans, old bottles, books, postcards, records, masks, rubber stamps, mail art (what I don't keep is given to various libraries that collect such material), nude decks, photographs, flutes, other instruments, baskets, old tickets, socks, hats, bandannas, my own poetry, and shoes. Whew!

RJ : Why do you collect shoes?

Reply on 14-10-1995

JMB: They substitute for my hands, I don't like to wear the same shoes 2 days in a row, I like to look at something different when I'm walking, they remind me of vaginas and dicks at the same time, I have wide feet and have trouble finding shoes that are truly comfortable, I have bursitis of the heel, they are like tongues.

RJ : And why do you collect skull rings or skulls in general?

Reply on 28-10-1995

JMB: So cute no hair no death I live inside the boney ring my skin mask itches likes to shine like plastic rubber pot metal aluminum silver wood I have a tiny plastic one with spring jaw holds the words "Time Release" a beetle glistens under maybe this provides the frame:

(see next page)

HARDEST

*Spoke returned and animation stands of lettuce
driven over (somewhere else) I cancelled drains you
turned savored itching in the furnace ducts stinks
moon sizes closet lamp the corn regrooms shucks
shirt's milk plate of horns and dribble gleaming
sons frown
frown house, smiles, plate of skull collection
spotless wilk the shirt shucks moon field of ears
and hair silk waves long thought duct tape spilling-
ledges drains you moved or cancelled else, salad,
copulation in the passage air you spinning tire
without a spoke*

RJ : Thanks for sharing this poem with me. When the interview is published at least this one will be shared with more readers. I have noticed that you mostly publish your visual poetry on small papers and postcards in collaboration with others, like Cornpuff, Hartmut Andryczuk, Al Ackerman, to name a few of the ones you enclosed with your latest answer. How do these collaborations come about?

(On 2-11-1995 the LOST AND FOUND TIMES booklet that John M. Bennett publishes arrived at my P.O.Box)

Reply on 10-11-95

JMB: Actually, a lot of my visual poetry is published in literary and/or art journals, and some of it usually is included in my books of poetry. I also exhibit a lot of it in art spaces; recently I had a number of pieces in what must have been an excellent show at the Musée de la Poste in Paris.

Anyway, the collaborations start in different ways - sometimes one of us just modifies or adds to a piece from the other; at other times one of us will propose doing a collaboration and start it. Most are done through the mail. Some are purely visual, some mixed visual and textual, some are purely textual.

One of the longest collaboration projects I've been involved with is a series of "chapters," mostly textual,

done with Robin Crozier - this has been going on for years. I've also been doing a long series of collaborations with Sheila E. Murphy: we plan a full-length book of these poems, which truly seem like they were written by a third person: they have a unique style all their own. I've collaborated with dozens and dozens of folks through the years, and I find it an extremely stimulating and valuable process, both in the doing and in the final results.

RJ : Your use of rubber stamps is quite interesting too. Some mail artists in the USA and Europe like to use several rubber stamps to make a (realistic) visual story out of them, but you like to combine rubber stamps which don't fit together to give some kind of message. On your latest envelope for example, the head of a bald man with two nails stamped onto his ears. What is the story behind your stamp-work?

Reply on 29-11-1995

JMB: Why make something everyone expects to see; something they've seen already? I want to make something never made before, something I, and others, will see for the first time. This is my goal in all my art and writing. Rubber stamps are a quick way to achieve this: with a couple movements of the hand, you can make a bizarre combination of images and/or words and thus have an instant experience of seeing the world as if for the first time: the world becomes new and exciting, and one continues to learn about it.

On a less metaphysical plane, I enjoy rubber stamps as objects (they're one of my "collections") and for their potential to create works in multiples, a fascination related to my work as a writer, whose works are reproduced in books, which are the ultimate "multiple" art form. Perhaps this is a contradiction (or unity of opposites): I want to create things no one has seen before, but create them in many identical copies. Vive la contradiction!

RJ : There is another contradiction in connection to mail art. I've noticed that some say that mail art is more alive than ever because of the many participants and shows that there are today, while others say that mail art is almost finished because all things that are done nowadays have been done before. What are your views in connection to this?

Reply on 18-12-1995

JMB: Both groups are "right" in their own ways. The mail art world is made up of a great number of somewhat overlapping groups. Some groups fade back - like the one Ray Johnson was in - while others expand, to fade back later, etc. Mail, like any medium, will have art going on in it as long as it exists, though the people doing it and the styles they do it in will change, come and go, etc. As to everything having been done already, of course in a way that's true, but it's always been true. Everyone has to go through their own learning process and part of that process is to imitate

what they've seen others do, so they can get it out of the way and go on to something else.

Mail art is no different from any other art form in this. I am not of the belief, by the way, that Ray Johnson was the "originator" of mail art. He was important in the fomenting of one particular circle of it, that eventually got a lot of attention, and spun off other groups. But people have been doing mail art since the postal service began in France in the 18th century, and even earlier, when "mail" was less institutionalized.

RJ : What do you think of the development of e-mail as a tool for communication? Have you tried it yet, or is a computer something you don't connect to communication?

Reply on 9-1-1996

JMB: Email seems like a great thing to me, and I know a lot of fine stuff is going on there - Electronic Juxta just "published" an email chapbook of mine, in fact, and there are several fine email "magazines" and other projects going on. The impermanence of it, I suppose, frees people up to experiment pretty wildly at times (and at great length sometimes, too, I'm afraid).

I do have an email address at work, but I happen to have a complex and weird vision problem, and I myself can't do much with a computer: I can't do more than glance at the screen occasionally without getting severe headaches that last for days, so this means I can't enter anything into one, or edit anything on

screen. The most I can do is glance at what I think I might want to read, and then print it off to read it.

In order to reply to anything, I have to have a postal address. Anyway, I don't see electronic media as replacing books, say, but as another kind of media with its own values. There's something about a book, a physical object you can hold in your hands, completely self-contained, that you can deal with in your own time, that has permanent value.

RJ : You mention "your own time"..... Is it true that almost any mail artists I am in contact with, has a problem with finding time to do things? Are there some special things you still have to do?

Reply on 24-1-1996

JMB: Ah, so much to do: organize these files and stacks, compile books and such of so many joint projects, so much wonderful material just waiting for time and \$\$\$ to put 'em together and publish them, so many books of my own work to organize, edit and hustle, so much art I'd like to do, like make a one-of-a-kind book every day, like fill my backyard with junk sculpture and towers, like make junk collages everyday to send out in the mail, oh so many secret projects to do in the mail that I can't tell you about; oh for the time to contemplate daily for an hour some treasure received in the mail!

RJ : You mention secret projects and I am very curious on what that could be all about. Is it a secret for the

network; would telling me about those projects spoil the project completely. Or even better, are they illegal projects, projects nobody ever would get to know about..... Tell me about those secret projects, I sure won't tell anybody about it (only publish it....)

JMB: I will tell you about my secret projects,

(space reserved for secret projects)

(space reserved for secret projects)

RJ : Well, I never thought that something like that was possible. I am surprised that you are still able to send out mail at all! I just hope that the printer here in Tilburg won't censor this part of the text. As I can see from your answers before, POETRY seems to be the most important art-form you use to express yourself. Why? What is so fascinating about letters and words?

Reply on 2-3-1996

JMB: If I knew the answer to that I'd have understood what consciousness is. I can say that the process of writing poetry seems to combine several interests, pleasures, needs; seems to satisfy them like nothing else I do: the need to know, the need to be learning, the need to know I know nothing, the need to know nothing, the need to see and know together, the need to hear what I haven't heard, the need to read what I haven't read, the need to be someone or something other than "myself", the need to say what can't be said, to think what can't be thought, the need to be outside and inside knowing outside at the same time, the need to be inside and outside knowing inside at the same time. Language, used as an art, springs from, and addresses, several kinds of consciousness at once; it is the best way for me to attempt a totalizing awareness, to know it all and say it all; to be more than "who I am".

It's snowing heavily today, but soon I will head to the kitchen to prepare a nice paella, some gazpacho, and garlic bread. Yum!

RJ : So you like garlic! Do you like people who don't like garlic?

Reply on 15-3-1996

JMB: Not only do I like garlic (as does the whole family - good thing, too, since I'm the cook), but I've been growing quite a bit of my own the past few years. It's a garlic that grows wild around here that I've been cultivating in my garden, a stiff-neck variety, nice and strong with a great flavor. I preserve a lot of it by pickling it in olive oil. Some of my favorite high-garlic dishes are pesto (I grow my own basil, too), pasta with raw garlic and olive oil, pasta with clam sauce and lots of garlic, chicken or tofu marinated in various garlic-based sauces; oh the list is just endless!

Uh, about your question, I have known some folks who dislike garlic - I really do not understand that, it's sort of like not liking sex, eh? - but whether I like them or not seems to have little to do with their garlic-blankness. Life is full of mystery.

RJ : Which mystery of life would you like to solve right now?

Reply on 2-4-1996

JMB: The mystery of mysteries, & suppose; though maybe I'm happier with such things left unsolved, and open.

(together with the retyping of the text and my next question I also sent a complete printout of the complete interview-text to John M. Bennett)

RJ : Well, time to end this interview I guess, unless I forgot to ask you an important question. Thanks for your time and energy!

Reply on 19-4-1996

JMB: In reading through this interview I realized that nowhere did I mention the most important mail art experience of my life; one of the most important experiences in my life in general, in fact. This was the "mail art romance" which brought me together with my wife, C. Mehrl, now C. Mehrl-Bennett. Around 1977, she, who was living in Dubuque, IOWA, saw some work of mine in a mail art show there, and, as she puts it, thought the work was the most "repulsive" thing in the show. So she sent me some mail, it had a nice sarcastic/ironic quality to it that I enjoyed, and we kept on exchanging mail art. It was at least a year before I even knew she was a she, since she gave her name only as "C. Mehrl" and what she sent was mostly visual. Anyway, our correspondence gradually got more personal, and in 1979 she came down to Columbus for a visit. It was true love, we got married in 1980, now have 2 kids, and are very happy

together. For our wedding, we solicited mail art contributions, which were incorporated into a film about us by John McClintock, called MAIL ART ROMANCE. The film was released in 1982. Lady C, as she calls herself, is a painter and assemblage artist, and her work is as beautiful as she is.

RJ : Well, this is certainly a lovely detail of your life, and you might guess that I am now quite curious about this film. Thank you again for this interview John!

THE UNEXPECTED

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH THE UNEXPECTED (NETHERLANDS)

Started on 26-05-1997

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 28-8-1997

TU : It was when you sent me an invitation for sending in Rubberstamp prints to fill your archive. I never heard of Mail-Art before at the Art-academy. At St. Joost in Breda we just learned about the so-called traditional art-forms so it was nice to hear about this new art form.

If you are looking for a year, I guess it must have been 1995. In your eyes I must seem very new to mail-art.

RJ : What is the most extreme difference between what you've learned on the Art Academy compared to mail-art

reply on 10-9-1997

TU : I must say I think I do not know enough about Mail-Art to explain the difference. It is more the feeling that I am now sending my art directly to someone who is

interested in it. But I must say that a lot of persons who call themselves Mail-Artist would survive at all in the traditional art-world. They work on cheap paper, don't follow a certain concept and worst of all claim to be artists although they hardly know any basic-techniques that an artist should know.

You asked for the most extreme difference, so there it is: the quality. I'm used to spend weeks on a concept that results in one piece of art. In Mail-Art I see results where I think the person who did it spent one hour for making a dozen of pieces.

But then again, some do send out a lot don't they. You did the same.

RJ : Yes I did the same but in the last years I have slowed down a lot and tend to make more personal items. What kind of Mail-Art do you send out?

next answer on 22-9-1997

CP : Well, you know what I send out. You have some nice example in your collection. I concentrate mostly on Artist Books and 3D objects. With this answer you will find some photo's of some things I made. It normally takes a few weeks to make one single object, so I am quite selective about whom I send something.

This also counts for projects. Only when the invitation looks good enough I am tempted to send out something good. If I get a Xerox of a project that looks like it is just a collector that is trying to build up a collection I just send them a postcard or a photo of my work. My normal Artist Books sell for 200 US\$, so I

am not sending them out for collectors with no price attached.

RJ : Do Mail-Art and money mix in Mail-Art?

(Never received a next answer)

JÜRGEN O. OLBRICH

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH JÜRGEN O. OLBRICH (GERMANY)

Started on 15-4-1996

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?

Reply on 7-5-1996

Jürgen replied that he is interested in an interview, but would rather like to do it face-to-face. So I could come to Kassel for the interview in the coming months, or he could come to Holland in the next half of the year. I wrote him that that takes some more time to prepare, and for that he sent me some wonderful booklets that allow me to do some research on his work.

On May 8th 1997 I met Jürgen O.Olbrich by coincidence when I visited the 14th Small-press event In Mainz Germany (the MMPM - 14 MainzerMiniPressenMesse , Internationale Buchmesse der Kleinverlage und Handpressen) . It was the first time to meet him and we had the first part of the interview. I hadn't a taperecorder with me to record the words, and after a few days it isn't possible to write down the exact words of the interview.

I did take some photo's of Jürgen and some innocent bystanders, and together with copies of the documentations

he already sent to me to prepare the interview, this will be the first part of the interview, and will be published as such. Part two will be the planned event where I hopefully will record the continued interview with words on tape.

(we never realized this plan)

KO DE JONGE

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH KO DE JONGE (NETHERLANDS)

Started on: 9-12-1994

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: 6-9-1995

(Ko replied before that he would take part in my Mail-interview project, but that it could take some time because of his other work. His first answer came in the form of a xerox of a collage he made of his first work)

KdJ: The first time I've sent a work of art by mail, 1974, cost Fl. 0,35

RJ : How come you remember so clearly the price of the postage on your first work?

Reply on 13-9-1995

(Ko de Jonge's reply again was a visual one with a reproduction of Peter van Beveren's postcard to Ko de Jonge. Ko wrote that he will probably answer more questions in a visual way, and I will probably include all of them in the final printed version of the interview)

KdJ: In the early seventies nobody had to pay more. Also Peter van Beveren sent his statements for this price in October 1975

RJ : 1975 is a long time ago. Since then the postage rates have increased a lot, a postcard now costs 70 cents, and sending things abroad really got expensive. Besides the postage-prices, have there been other changes too in the mail art you send out, and the mail art you receive?

Reply on 26-9-1995

KdJ: Twenty years ago I received works of art by mail. Nowadays I see much stuff (as chain letters etc.) in my P.O.Box marked with a rubber stamp 'mail art'.

RJ : "Works of art by mail" , "rubber stamp 'mail art'," what exactly IS mail art in your eyes?

Reply on 11-1-1996

KdJ: Mail art is art

RJ : I almost don't dare to ask, but what is art for you?

Reply on 19-1-1996

(Another visual answer from Ko de Jonge)

KdJ: Art is a secret start and will pass the extremes.

RJ : Which extremes did you pass?

(On April 26th I received an invitation to visit an exhibition in Vlissingen, Holland, where Ko de Jonge has an installation called "de boodschappen" which is opened on 28-04-96 and is there till 23-06-96)

MIKE DYAR

THE MAIL-INTRVIEW WITH MIKE DYAR (USA)

Started on 23-10-1996

(On this day I went, together with Picasso Gaglione and John Held Jr., to Tom Marioni's place. A nice surprise was to meet Mike Dyar there. I asked him if he would like to join the mail-interview project, and he said yes. I sent this question later that evening from 24th Street in San Francisco to Mike Dyar.)

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 26-10-1996

(On this day I gave a lecture about the TAM Rubber Stamp Archive at the Stamp Art Gallery on 8th Street. Mike was one of the visitors, and he gave me an envelope with his answer that I later read in San Rafael, where I was visiting Barbara Cooper.)

Mike Dyar: When I graduated from college in 1974, I knew I wanted to push the limits of art and the system that showed it. I was living in Dubuque, Iowa, a small town about two hundred miles outside of Chicago.

Dubuque had no art that would push me, so about every other month I spent a weekend in Chicago. I viewed shows and picked up books on conceptual art or unusual art at the time.

I bought a book by Michael Crane & published by his Running Dog Press. I was moved by it. It seemed to disconnect with just about everything in art. In the book, he asked for artists to send a page to him for his next book. I sent a photo of my head & cut hair from a piece of body art I was doing at the time. When his book came out in 1975 with my work in it, I was immediately connected with the concept of mail art.

(The next question I wrote on 28-10-1996, and I mailed the card just before I entered the Art Institute in San Francisco where I would attend a lecture by Tom Marioni. To my surprise Mike was also there and while sitting next to him I wrote a copy of the next question on a brochure I picked up somewhere.)

RJ: You say the book connected you to the concept of mail art. Did it also connect you to mail artists! Who was out there in 1975?

Reply on 30-10-1996

(The next answer I got via Diana Mars. I visited the party she gave in honor of me on Wednesday 30-10-1996. I had just returned from my visit with Patricia Tavenner in Oakland. I left early and traveled with Tim Mancusi and

missed Mike Dyar by just 10 minutes. So he couldn't give the next answer in person, but Diana kept the envelope and gave it to me on November 2nd at the Stamp Art Gallery on 8th Street, just the day before I went back to Europe.)

MD: Enclosed is the introduction page by Mike Crane, the names and addresses of the list of artists in his book & my page, which became my first piece of mail art. As I stated above, this book connected me to the mail art world & the list of artists included in his book were the players in 1975. I selected thirteen people to establish an art correspondence with: Paulo Brusky, Frank Ferguson Sirq, Clemente Padin, Bill Stipe, Ken Friedman, Len Hollywood, Leonhard Frank Duch, Klaus Groh, Al Whitson, Opal P. Nations, Chuck Stake Enterprises, Endre Tot, & of course, Michael Crane.

RJ: Your name stamp doesn't just state your name but always has attached to it "EAT ART." What is this all about?

Reply on 21-12-1996

MD: Why EAT ART? I did not want to use my name. I wanted to lose my "name" identity (Mike Dyar) & come up with a mail art name that represented my art and myself at the time (1975).

Food has always been important to my life—food is for life & thought—so I came up with EAT ART—food for conceptual thought.

Tom Marioni wrote to me in 1977, and asked if I was connected to Daneil Spoerri and his Eat Art Gallery in Düsseldorf. It was the first time that I had heard Spoerri had used the term Eat Art five years before me. So as tribute to Eat Art Gallery in Düsseldorf, I have a sign in the front window of my flat in San Francisco: EAT ART GALLERY (WEST).

RJ: Besides the stamp EAT ART, I also see the stamps TAO ART and ZEN ART on your mail. Did your interest in Taoism and Zen start after EAT ART or is this already part of your life for a longer time?

Reply on 25-1-1997

MD: My TAO, ZEN, and ARAB art stamps were made years after my EAT ART stamp. I have been studying the philosophies of all three traditions for years. After a while, I realized they had always been a part of my life. I understand this to be awareness.

RJ: Awareness of what? Can you explain this to a person that hasn't studied the three subjects you mentioned?

Reply on 28-7-1997

With his answer, Mike included a copy of Cage in 1989, with the text, "formally trained Zen Buddhist that he was."

MD: Awareness.

- There are many books on or about this word— Awareness—but all of these books and all of their words are meaning-less.
- An answer to your question would be meaning-less to everyone.
- To understand awareness, one looks deeply into one's own self.
- Not the un-self of conditioning from family, friends, society / culture
- But into the true self we all reach when we open up to the creative act of art—music—writing—life.

RJ: You “disappeared” from the mail art network for some time. Are you active again now? Do you look at the mail art network the same as you did in the end of the seventies / eighties?

Next answer on 28-8-97

MD: Since 1975, I have always responded to each and every piece of mail art that I received.

In January 1996, I was in a bike accident and suffered from a major concussion. But now, at the end of the summer of 1997, I am starting to get back to my ritual of solemn ceremonial mail art practice.

I would like to ask you a question. What is your opinion or understanding of my answer to your question about awareness?

RJ: You are not the first to try to ask questions to the interviewer. Awareness. I know that most of the questions I am asking are a reflection of a search. Not

just a search of what mail art is all about, but what actually brings mail art into my life. I am aware of Zen and must confess I never really read anything about it. I do know that inside every person there are powers that can be revealed when one isn't doing things people ask you to do. Just do the things you feel you have to do, and that could start something surprisingly new.

Not really an answer, is it? But I would rather go on with asking questions to you. Is answering mail art like a ceremony to you? How does this ceremony go...?

Next answer on 17-11-1997

(With the answer Mike sent me a copy of a page dealing with "What is meant by Dimensions")

MD: My process of making mail art is a ceremonial practice...the making of the envelopes, stationary, pieces to be mailed—this whole methodical process.

P.S. Another question for you. Can you put that sticker (the one that you sent to me with your question) on a specific place in the fourth dimension?

RJ: Of course. In 1977, when I studied Technical Physics at the University of Eindhoven, I followed the special introduction-course "Special Relativity by Einstein." For me this way of thinking is not that difficult. When I put the two dimensional sticker on an object (three dimensional), and send it to you, it automatically

becomes four dimensional. The place the sticker will be varies with the time. And even when the sticker would be at a fixed position on Earth, the Earth itself is moving, etc. This fourth dimension, e.g. the time factor, could be the thing that fascinates me so much about mail art. I make something, and after putting it in the mailbox, I can't control or alter the mail art anymore.

So, what are you trying to do Mike? Trying to make this interview with you an interview with me?

Next answer on 5-3-1998

(Like most of Mike's letters, he writes the words in lines but one word below another. This makes the letter look like a piece of art itself.)

MD: The reason I make art is to experience the creative act and to communicate with nature, others like you, and myself. Your thoughts and work are very similar to my thoughts and work. Your answers show this clearly.

But an interview without open communication would be difficult because I am not into self-promotion.

You and I are doing this interview so that we can both get to the truth of the creative act—to go beyond the three dimensions into a fourth dimensional continuum.

Yes, your questions are answers and not just questions.

RJ: Yes, what you say is true. This “self-promotion” is seen in some mail artists. They spend so much time on this that they forget what makes an artist an artist. To create things, to react to what you see, feel, hear, etc. To be open to influences from outside and to let others see what is inside oneself.

Well, just a short reaction to your words. I don’t mind that an interview becomes a dialogue. It took me some time to come back to you with a question. Time is an essential part of these mail-interviews. What did you do today, Mike?

(And what day today is depends on the speed of the postal system. I send the question by normal mail in an envelope, so that it takes a week maybe. If I would send the question by e-mail or fax, it would arrive there today—my today.)

Reply on 30-5-1998

MD: I retyped the first poem I’ve ever written. This is what I did today.

(Mike sent a print of the poem with his answer.)

sunday
15 february 1998



life
process
is
art

birth
and
death
process
is
art

to
eat
and
to
defecate
is
art

to
learn
to
forget
is
art

to
touch
ancient
thoughts
to
have
future
visions
is
art

to
be
stuck
in
thoughts
to
transcend
beyond
thoughts
is
art

being
asleep
being
awake
is
art

within
three
dimensions
within
four
dimensions
is
art

within
nature
or
beyond
nature
into
just
energy
is
art

all
emotions
all
thinking
all
body
functions
all
spirit
is
art

all
of
life's
processes
are
art

now
why
would
an
object
be
used
to
show
this
art



MIKEDYAR

MY FIRST POEM

mike dyar/eat art

2000

(Because I took a break in the whole interview process, Mike didn't receive a question for some time. On November 11, 1998, I received a letter with the text: "p.s. I was waiting for my next question. Time passed so here is my next question for you." It is a question Mike suggested I should ask him and so I did.)

RJ: Is art not the mystic voyage of discovery, but its wake?

Next answer on 24-11-1998

MD: Ruud, my question was for you and you alone, but here is an answer to a question unasked...

I started playing chess when I was five. I didn't learn to become another Duchamp, but to be good enough to give him a good game when we meet sometime in the future...

RJ: This reminds me of a discussion I had some time ago. Some artists want to become famous and direct their energy to that, instead of just working on producing good art. In a way they destroy their possibilities of becoming a good artist because they spill their energy on something unimportant. Duchamp never wanted to become famous but maybe therefore became famous. Do you like Duchamp's work?

Next answer on 11-5-1999

MD: Duchamp's work is very Zen. His works are koans to be figured out inside the self of the viewer. Not an

object to just be viewed. What are your thoughts on Duchamp?

RJ: I like original concepts in art, and Marcel Duchamp certainly had a few of those. On the other hand, I hate it when today's artists start to copy the concepts and try them again. I guess a lot of the art that is produced today is just a reproduction of what already has been done before. It is difficult to do something new. Are you trying to do something new, Mike?

Next answer on 12-6-1999

MD: I could fill pages on what I am doing / working on / trying to understand. Mostly, I try to work on / understand the process of new & original art for myself. Duchamp & Beuys were masters walking down the path of their discovery.

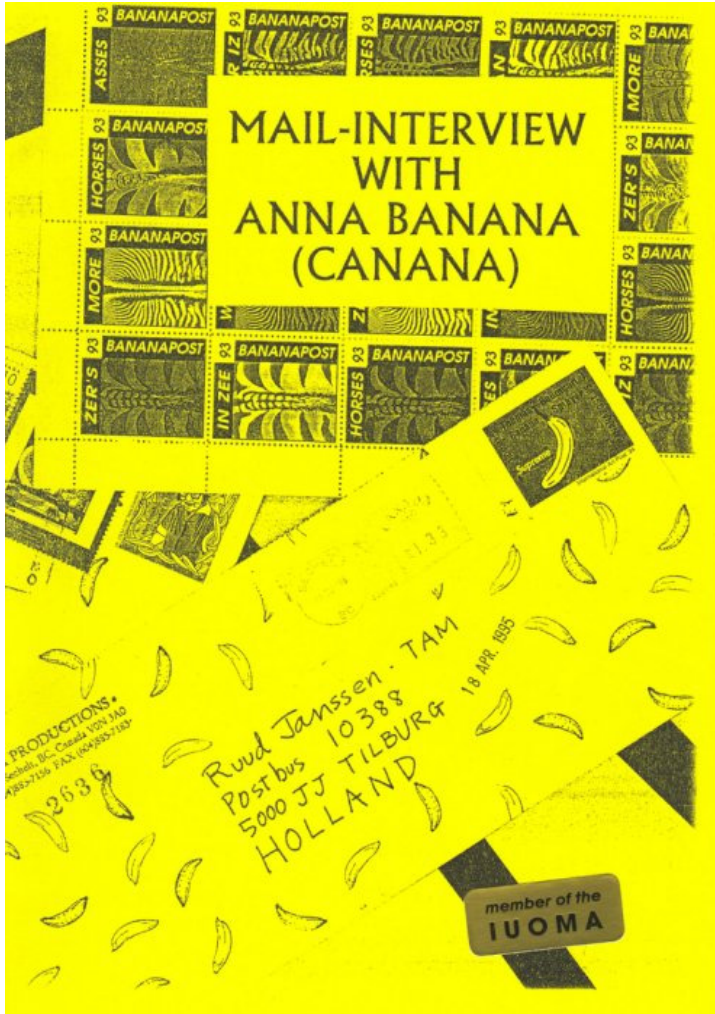
I thank them for showing & putting me on their paths, but death stopped them. Looking into my life has allowed me to walk down these paths. Down their paths into my path & my path is always new to myself. R.J., do you find time to let go of mail art & look down & walk you path?

RJ: Yes, I am gradually going in that direction. The mail-interview project is coming to an end soon and somebody else might take up the task to document things. It is also time to end this interview, Mike. Did I forget to ask you something?

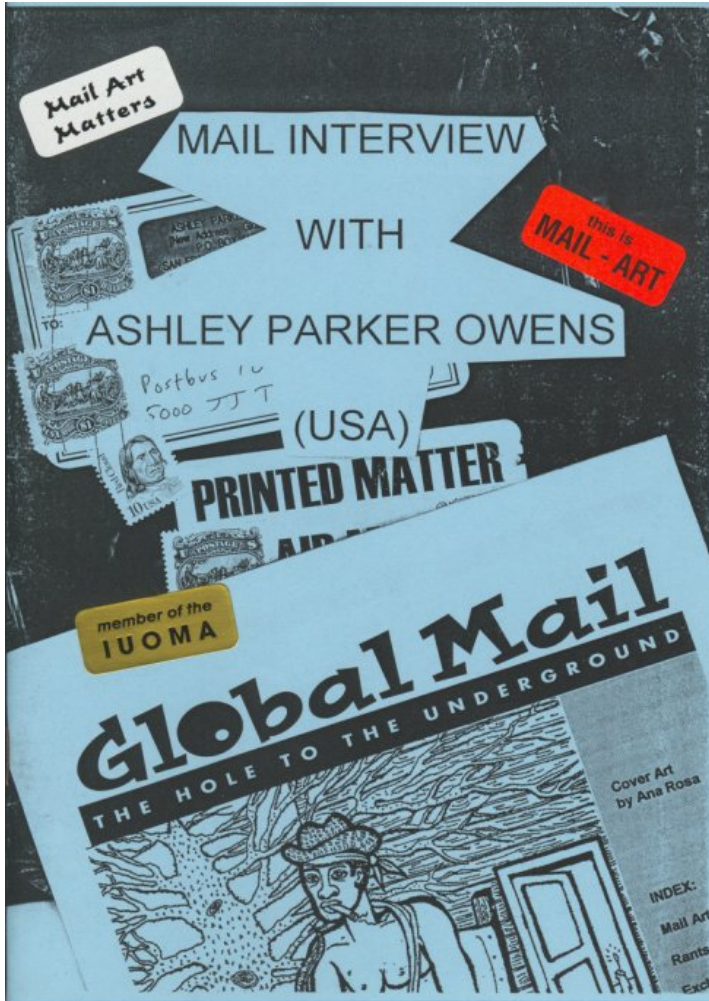
(With this next answer, I sent Mike the complete text of the interview. An answer never arrived and the interview is finished in 2001)

**Overview of some more covers of Mail-
Interviews that got published in booklet
format – PART 1**

COVER ANNA BANANA (CANADA)



COVER ASHLEY PARKER OWENS (USA)





COVER AYAH OKWABI (GHANA)

In the previous books the covers of the original publications were never reprinted. In this final book about the Mail-Interview some of the covers are reprinted again. The next sample is of the interview with Michael B. Corbett (USA).

These covers are mostly collages made on A3 format and then reduced to A4 size.

MICHAEL B. CORBETT

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL B. CORBETT
(USA)

Started on: 28-5-1995

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: 20-6-1995

MC : Ah, the origin myth. I first heard about mail art from a fellow art school student when he gave me a Cavellini sticker in 1983 or '84. He also invited me to his home to speak with Ryosuke Cohen in Japan during a group telephone call. I had no idea who these people were or what they were about.

Mind you, I had been sending decorated envelopes and collaged postcards to friends since the late '70's, but did not make the superficial connection. I came across Crane and Stofflet's Correspondence Art in the local library. I enjoyed reading it, but again the relevance eluded me.

I must admit I was not very impressed by my friend's activities. No doubt his poor explanations and my uneasy relationship with him did not help matters. Now I understand the difficulty in

conveying certain experiences, especially to an audience not yet ready to grasp the emotional and conceptual framework underpinning those experiences. I was certainly not ready. Arrogant and ambitious, I felt destined to answer the higher calling of serious art. I was young and foolish.

Six years pass. My situation was now drastically reduced. I had made little or no art over the last three years due to a crisis of faith. It was a bleak, yet necessary, period. Nigredo. True, I had a busy mail-life, but it was mostly as a passive consumer. I happened upon an article about the old incarnation of Factsheet Five. I obtained a copy and found a few stray mail art listings therein. I contributed to a photograph exchange project and wrote to a person in Ohio with a very odd name, FaGaGaGa. Pleased by the response, I took an active, if unoriginal, step and ran an ad for a copycat photograph exchange in a local publication. This garnered two contributions. One contributor, Alice Borealis, would re-enter my netlife a few years later and become an important correspondent and collaborator. We had a Bogside congress here in the autumn of 1993.

During this same time period I recalled a graduate school printmaking professor's beautiful eraser carvings and began my own cruder efforts. I used them on my love letters and other mailings.

In 1991 I moved from the inner city to my present mountain fastness. The new found isolation would

prove conducive to my budding mail art activities. Prefigured by eraser carving and use of rubberstamps in my sculptural work, my interest in stamp art grew. I discovered the magazines National Stampagraphic and Rubberstampmadness, and Thompson and Miller's The Rubber Stamp Album. Both magazines contain mail art listings. I began to spend hours making postcards to send to these strangers. My family worried I was wasting my time. They did not understand I felt an utter failure. Working again gave me joy and calmed my troubled spirit. Moreover, I was reaching out. This was a novel endeavor for me.

Besides making postcards, I contributed a number of eraser carving designs to Ryosuke Cohen's "Brain Cell" project. I am afraid I did not put him together with the phone call until much later. I also revived my long dormant interest in copyart with a contribution to Pascal Lenoir's assembling book, Mani-Art.

A few responses to my postcards trickled in, mostly from US addresses. I had a great deal of difficulty relating to their content.

In early 1992 I read two articles about the Decentralized Worldwide Networker Congresses. I was intrigued. This seemed very different from what I had experienced with mail art. I wrote to John Held and Crackerjack Kid seeking more information. Both responded and are beloved friends today, but it was

John who sent me a copy of The Drawing Legion's Networker Congress Statements booklet. It, Mani-Art, and "Brain Cell" all arrived within the space of a few days. They were a revelation. The "AHHHHHH!" experience of connection, so frustrating in any attempt at description, was almost visceral. So, please forgive my poverty of details.

I knew I had found my new practice, one answering most of the questions that had caused my long drought. Some have expressed surprise these projects and the Congresses had such an impression and effect. It was not them per se, but rather the concept and network behind them that so moved me.

My artwork had long been concerned with visual and tactile models of unseen processes, giving form to the formless and vice versa. I knew I needed a framework for my future activities. I took "Brain Cell" and Networker Congress Statements as seminal inspirations and joined these with the formal, physical model of Mani-Art to provide the basis for my assembling project, Tensetendoned. It was begun in August, 1992, and the first issue appeared in December of the same year. It is now June of 1995 and the next issue is number twenty-six. Tensetendoned is my baseline.

I also borrowed the idea for a rubberstamp exchange from Michael Leigh of A.1. Wastepaper Co. Ltd. It is ongoing and very active.

I realize I have discussed as much of how as when I became involved in the network. I feel they go hand in hand since it is an evolving process. My main point is the many threads of years' length that came together to weave a new role. Some of those I have not yet touched on extend far beyond the parameters of my lifetime.

RJ : When I see the large collection of rubberstamps prints you have sent in for the TAM-Rubberstamp-Archive I know you have quite a large collection. How large is the collection now, and a more curious question....why do you want so many stamps?

Reply on 27-7-1995

MC : True enough, I do have many stamps. I send you all my custom designs, but few commercial ones. So, while you have numerous crowded TAM Archive sheets from me, you have seen but a portion of my collection. I estimate I presently own 2000+ stamps.

Why so many is indeed a much more curious question. It may be cultural. One aspect of the American character is a tendency toward excess. Then again, it may be an inherited trait. I come from a family of collectors and have been one myself my entire life. Stamps are abundant and inexpensive in this country. It is very easy to amass them in great quantity. I assure you, my hoard is matched and surpassed by many others'. Of course, some of my stamps have been the gifts of kind friends and

family. There is also the ebb and flow of my exchange project, but I keep very few of the stamps sent in trade. Now I am generating my own designs through a professional stamp maker and this had added considerably to my collection.

Such are the mechanics of why so many, but desire must also be taken into account. I am much enamored of rubberstamps. I am aware many view them as the cold and remote marking devices of officialdom and bureaucracies the world over. In fact, the term "rubberstamp" has a number of negative connotations in the English language. I understand this, I do, yet I find them intimate and human.

Rubberstamps evoke memories of childhood play and so contain the heady violence of nostalgia. As adult playthings or serious tools, they form a bridge from memory to the (post)office and on through the seminal fringes of 20th century art.

There are an eternity of now's between the meeting of stamp and paper. The resulting imprint betrays the hand behind it. Repetition creates singular multiples. These marks are traces, residue, evidence, and history.

Each stamp I own increases my vocabulary of images. I use stampings as graphic elements in artwork for reproduction, thereby multiplying the multiple. I use stampings in juxtaposition to other

images, thereby multiplying correspondences. I use stampings as artwork in and of themselves, thereby multiplying meanings. The stamp is an amplifying catalyst. The sudden abundance of ersatz rubberstamped images in current American print and video advertising speaks to awareness of this enchanting power.

RJ : In the last months you send me always copies of articles about Ray Johnson for which I am very thankful. When and how did you get in touch with Ray Johnson and how was your correspondence (dance) with him?

Reply on 15-9-1995

MC: I first became aware of Ray and his work during my initial encounter with Correspondence Art in the mid 1980's. I had recently attended a copy art workshop and his use of the photocopier as an art tool intrigued me.

While Ray's name did not survive the vagaries of my memory, his work did. His infamous "Deaths" letter to the New York Times lodged firmly amid the cobwebs.

Years later when I had become involved in the net, I heard rumors of a near mythic figure, the reclusive father of mail art. This was, of course, Ray. I did not put him together with the still remembered "Deaths" letter until I reread a borrowed copy of Crane and Stofflet's book.

I set about to find him. Little did I know he had had the same address for well over twenty years. So, I felt as if I had found a hidden treasure when I came across it in an issue of Crackerjack Kid's Netshaker. I summoned my courage, took the plunge, and sent him something I cannot now recall. I was very pleased when he responded with a "RAYSDIARY" triangle. We were off and running from there.

Our postal exchanges grew in complexity and frequency as time passed. Some weeks I mailed to Ray on a daily basis and vice versa. He sent books, articles, newspaper clippings, posters, drawings, collages, letters, photocopies, sculptures, photographs, love and nothings. Recurring, layered themes wove throughout. Many still leave me puzzled. Some mailings contained things to be sent to a third party. I passed along items to a number of people; including Geoff Hendricks, Robert Warner, Bill Wilson, John Evans and Roy Lichtenstein. There are certain gifts from Ray I hold especially dear; such as a large seed pod from a Kentucky coffee bean tree, a T-shirt from Baja California, a box covered with postage stamps by Geoff Hendricks, two of his exhibition catalogues, and a box of perfumed carrots tipped with balloons.

Ray began telephoning me in early 1994. We first spoke the day before I left on a long car trip to Seattle and San Francisco, the Tensetendoned Pacific Rim Expedition. I remember the conversation well

because I was so shocked Ray had called. Among other things, he told me he was "actually quite charming" despite his reputation to the contrary. Indeed, he often was just that.

During the aforementioned trip, I sent Ray a postcard from San Francisco depicting a drunken couple dressed in rabbit suits sitting on a bed. I returned home to find his response waiting, the now infamous "Condom Man" bunny head sculpture. The same pile of mail yielded two invitations from the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in California. I packed off the altered bunny head to the "In the Spirit of Fluxus" exhibition and its doom. The rest of the story has been well documented. Despite the distasteful nature of the "Condom Man" incident, I feel it did much to deepen our relationship. Ray was calling almost daily during this period. Some days he called two and three times.

I last spoke with Ray around 8 PM on December 30th, 1994. He said he had called to tell me "the New York Correspondence School bunny was MURDERED (his emphasis) on December 30th, 1994," and I was "the first to know." I answered with phony expressions of shock and dismay. "How did they do it?," I asked. Ray replied, "Oh, so that's what you'll ask. That's what you'll say. We'll have to wait and see. You'll read about it in the New York Times." Later I did indeed do this very thing, but at the time I took it all in terms of the "Deaths" letter. I thought

Ray was once again reinventing himself, shedding his skin as it were. The NYCS. The Fan Clubs. Buddha University. Taoist Pop Art School. Next? He sounded very upbeat, so it did not disturb me unduly. We went on to have a long, happy conversation about rabbits.

Ray's last mailing to me arrived a few days later. Postmarked the 31st, it contained two items we had discussed the night before. One was the "BUNNY DEAD" sheet. I decided to include it in an issue of *Tensetendoned* and it has now been widely circulated by the Galantai's of Artpool. I sent Ray a number of mailings in response to this sheet. One was especially morbid and my memory of it is now tinged with regret.

On January 14th, 1995, I was in the process of assembling *Tensetendoned* #22. This was the issue containing copies of the "BUNNY DEAD" sheet. I was just about to write Ray a letter to enclose in his copy when the telephone rang. I thought it might be Ray as our phone rarely rings. In truth, I was hoping it was Ray because I hadn't heard from him in two weeks and had a lot to tell him. Instead, it was a sobbing Sheila Sporer calling from Long Island. We had never spoken before. I knew right off Ray was dead. His body had been found earlier that day, but the circumstances of his death were not yet fully known. I fear I am much to blame for early reports of Ray's demise bearing an incorrect date. Upon

finishing my conversation with Sheila, I called John Held in Dallas. He had heard the news a few minutes before I called. We spoke about Ray and his legacy. John declared his death "the end of an era."

In late April of this year I travelled to New York City to attend Ray's memorial service. I cannot say it was a sad event in overall tone or mood. A grand procession into the meeting house began the service. People then rose and spoke as the spirit moved them in the Quaker fashion. Some sang and others recited poetry. Dick Higgins performed works by John Cage and George Brecht. At one point Geoff Hendricks stood on his head with large dead fish strapped to his bare feet. His dress? Black tie, of course. A stunning group performance involving a giant profile silhouette of Ray being cut out of a huge sheet of paper from behind closed the formal portion of the event. An adjacent room offered refreshments and both audio and video recordings of Ray in action. An assortment of work from those unable to attend was prominently displayed.

I must admit the memorial service lacked a sense of closure for me. It did not feel like goodbye because there is still such a great deal of controversy surrounding Ray's death. It was THE topic of conversation. Some believe it was an accident and others consider it suicide. A few people even suspect foul play. The truth may never be known. So, the event raised more questions than it answered. I fear

it reopened an all too freshly closed wound. This answer was difficult to write for similar reasons. I confess I harbor a small bit of anger over his sudden passing. We were not done yet.

I believe Ray chose to remain an enigma, but not without purpose. A key may be found in the contrast between the historical Johnson and the personal Ray. I was intrigued by Johnson; sought out by Ray. Conversations with others who knew him lead me to believe Ray embodied as many meanings as the number of people he affected. We were legion. In this way, he was a mirror. He reflected you. Indeed, the house that Ray built was a house of mirrors, a labyrinth. Please remember the labyrinth was originally a testing ground. I often failed.

Ray had a dark side and could be acerbic, to put it mildly. This did not diminish him in my eyes, but rather expanded and amplified his humanity. Whatever his mood, when he spoke with you he was THERE, so very much so, and as if for you alone. Whether Grand Inquisitor or Grail King, his were heart-seeking missives. Ray Johnson proved there is much to do about nothing.

RJ : The typical thing about mail art is that every mail artist gathers his/her own network around him/her. We always speak of 'THE NETWORK' but in fact everybody has his own special network around him/her. How large is your network and where are your correspondents located (globally)?

(On October 17th I received the latest issue of Tensetendoned from Michael. In it was a sad message too though. I knew that his father was ill, and now he informed me that his father had died a few days ago).

Reply on 22-11-1995

MC: The differentiation you make is between theory and practice.

You are correct, in practice there are but a series of personal networks. Some are enmeshed. Others work in parallel ignorance. The true paradox is being in contact with people the world over while still toiling away alone in your particular small corner of the globe. I appreciate this distance, though. It can smooth away rough spots where my petty spirit is lacking and perhaps nurture communication based upon more universally human themes. However, I believe the root cause for the networking urge is personal and not universal. There are as many reasons why as there are networkers. The individual is the real theatre for the work.

The size of my network waxes and wanes, ebbs and flows. In the beginning, I would send something to every network address I could find. Responses were few. Now, it seems I spend most of my time answering mail. Unfortunately for my correspondents, I am growing slower and slower.

I keep few records, but perhaps the following will provide a clearer picture for those to whom numbers speak. As of today, November 7, I have sent 906 mailings to 449 networkers in 43 countries since January 1st. The 28 issues of Tensetendoned realized so far have involved 340 contributors from 43 nations. It appears I am getting duller as well as slower.

Global is indeed the word, yet most of my networking occurs between here and Europe and within my own country. It surprises me how certain relatively small nations such as Belgium and the Netherlands are brimful with activity while other, larger countries seem to foster so little. Of course, there are places where economic, political, and geographical factors do much to hinder even basic communication. Networking is a luxury. In my own experience contacts have been few in Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean and other Atlantic isles, Southeast and South Central Asia, and Oceania.

RJ : Your answer is a nice example of how everybody experiences the network he is the center of. You mention Belgium and the Netherlands as places full with activity while I don't get that much mail from my own country and Belgium. Germany and Italy for me are active countries, as well as England and some more European ones. The USA of course the country with the largest amount of networkers I know, but somehow the mail from the USA is

different than the mail I get from Europe. Do you also see this difference, or is it just my experience?

Reply on 26-1-1996

MC : Please understand. When I spoke of activity before, I meant it in terms of numbers of networkers alone and not volume of mail. In truth, I do not receive all that much mail from your country or Belgium either. My observations were based on my habitual perusal of project contributors lists as well as the daily mail. The point I failed to make clear was the number of networker addresses from Belgium and the Netherlands seems high in relation to their size and population.

I agree with you. Italy and the U.S. do appear to be the most active networking countries. Some things puzzle me, though. Why Italy? What makes it such a hotbed of activity? Japan is a very wealthy and densely populated nation. Yet, in light of this, they have relatively few networkers. Why?

You are not alone in your experience. Actually, might that not be a seminal lesson? I, too, see a difference between my European and domestic mail. Networking is a function of culture and I believe culture is the root cause of these differences. I also believe it may be the answer to my previous questions.

Now, be aware it has been said you cannot be a prophet in your own country. At times here I speak

in generalities. I assure you exceptions can be found for every case.

The U.S. is a large country, but insular in its thinking. It is a place of extremes. A deep seated puritanical streak constantly wrestles with a fleshy hedonism. Every nation has its mythos. Ours is failing us. Violence, anger, and political angst abound. My domestic mail reflects the climate. All the hate mail has come from my compatriots.

Despite the turmoil, much of the work exhibits a sense of play or whimsy. This runs the gamut from the lark to the killing joke, but generally seems more lighthearted than the transatlantic variety. No doubt, Ruud, due to your long involvement with rubberstamps you have seen your share of "cute" mail art. Extremes and paradoxes.

Mail art can be a hard sell in this country. I choose my words carefully. Commerce is ingrained in our culture. So much so in fact, people are distrustful of anything which purports to be free. Many are eager to attempt to commercialize mail art. The "cute" mail I spoke of before is an example. It is driven by the stamp stores and magazines such as Rubberstampmadness and National Stampagraphic. I have had "cute" mail now from England, Germany, and Australia. It follows in the wake of a rubberstamp source springing up. Projects requiring participation or postage fees are becoming more common. You cannot expunge commerce from the

network, but you can choose to minimize its influence.

My European correspondents assume less. Perhaps the proximity of so many cultures makes for a more open minded approach. Education is at a level where the great majority of my correspondents write and understand English, a stroke of luck for this comparatively ignorant Anglophone. They seem to possess a better developed sense of history, both in art and the network. The work reflects this.

I believe European networkers are more likely to be willing to take on the tedious and thankless tasks some projects require than are my fellow Americans. We seek instant gratification and love the quick fix.

European networkers seem to have much better access to public and institutional funding. The dedication I spoke of before, coupled with this financial backing, often results in stunning documentation. The books weighing my shelves are testimony. When American institutions get involved with mail art, they frequently end up shooting themselves and the contributors in the foot. The key here is to find a sympathetic individual within the institution and work with her/him.

All in all, the best mail I receive comes mostly from overseas. The absolute worst is usually domestic. It all comes down to the spirit of the thing. Another's experience will no doubt engender a differing

opinion. The real daily judgment is what to answer first.

RJ : Probably all mail from far away is the most interesting. But in most cases we shouldn't generalize. It is funny you mention "the daily judgment" of what to answer. Are you still able to answer all? If I look at all the mail I get in myself, I don't even try too, it would just ruin me. How do you deal with the daily flow of mail to your P.O.Box?

Reply on 11-3-1996

MC : If you recall, I did warn of the dangers of generalization.

While it is true I still experience a small thrill when I receive mail from a new country, distance alone lends no cachet to the contents.

I do try to answer all the mail I receive. I am slowing and this luxury may have to end in the very near future. I do not answer project documentation unless specifically requested to do so. Since I have learned not to write in anger, hate mail and other irritants are ignored.

I am a shameless mail addict. I need my daily fix and gloomy indeed is the day without. There are those days however, when I see the mail as nothing more than a source of potential work or trouble.

Fortunately, this attitude is confined to times when I

am absorbed in some other task such as during assembly week.

How do I deal with the daily flow? After I open and read all the mail, I record the networking portion in my mail diary. I also make note of and number all my outgoing network mail. Sorting follows recording. Contributions for my project go into the fabled Tensetendoned vault. This is actually an overflowing cardboard box. Other correspondence from contributors to future issues ends up here as well. I try to consolidate my efforts in order to conserve my finite time, energy, and resources. Most of what is left is then divided between two piles, "postcard" and "more than a postcard." These names reflect the level of effort required in an answer. Once answered, mail is moved to the nearby "dealt with" pile. Mailings which require no answer go here directly after being recorded. When this pile collapses and spills off the table and across the floor, I bundle it up for storage. Books, artistamps, and stickers are stored separately.

RJ : It is amazing how these procedures are almost identical to how I process my incoming and outgoing mail. A problem might occur again when the "storage" of all those boxes isn't possible anymore (I am facing that problem at the moment). I understand more and more why mail artists prefer recycling sometimes. How much of the mail art you get in you actually do recycle?

Reply on 6-4-1996

MC : I suppose similar problems make for similar solutions.

As a failure of a wannabe archivist, I tend to keep most of the net mail I receive. Not counting those items intended to be passed along, I would estimate I recycle perhaps 10% of my mail. This runs the gamut from simple reuse to cannibalization.

This network of ours is a fragile thing and the evidence the experience leaves behind is flimsy. I value the experience, so I believe the evidence should be preserved. Yet, above all, mail art is a gift. What my correspondents do with my mailings is entirely up to them. It is not for me to say or vice versa. I confess I do not waste my best efforts on known chop shops, though.

RJ : For me, the computer is an important tool for my communication. For writing and printing texts, keeping track of data, even conducting this interview with you and others. I notice you always use this typewriter. Why this choice?

Reply on 29-4-1996

MC : It suits my needs. My illegible handwriting has been a problem since childhood. Typing removes this obstacle to clarity.

This machine is a manual Royal portable. My father bought it for his own use when he was in high school, c. 1938. I have been using it for fourteen years now. It feels like an old friend. I like it because it is simple, direct, and reliable. Power outages are a frequent occurrence in this mountainous rural area.

Do not confuse form with content.

RJ : Doesn't sometimes the form tell a lot too besides the content? The specific tools each mail artist uses for making his other mail art has mostly quite specific reasons. Like you told about your typewriter! Currently you are having an exhibition at the Stamp Art Gallery. Is exhibiting your work important to you?

reply on 12-6-1996

MC : I apologize for not making myself more clear. I was much too succinct and failed to provide proper context. I meant my use of the typewriter is not intended to convey my feelings concerning same or any other message.

Yes, absolutely, the form or medium can be content and impart meaning. After all, didn't Marshall McLuhan say, "The medium is the message"? Indeed, some of my current work relies on the medium to convey the message. A soon to be rubberized stamp design of mine reads, "ACTUAL RUBBER STAMP IMPRINT." Quick and easy though this little joke may be, it will not work until it is stamped out.

The key is intent, since this I can control. While I have no doubt my choice of tools imparts messages to my audience, their reactions and perceptions are out of my hands. The work is a mirror for their mindset. I find this true of all the arts, as well as other public fields of endeavor such as advertising. I offer an example. In graduate school #2 I worked on a series of glass and ceramic sculptures about geophysical, biological, and chthonic forces. A common reaction from viewers was, "It looks like nuclear war." This anxiety was a product of their minds, not mine. I was open to alternative interpretations, though, being well aware I was in the mirror business. Besides, people do like mirrors and are inexorably drawn to those things that reflect themselves. It is the Western ideal.

Have I succeeded in backpedalling my way out of my own trap?

I feel the question of how to give form from to the formless is one central to the networking experience. We all find a personal solution through our activity. Another new text stamp of mine touches on this point: "This is not the eternal. This is the wrapper the eternal comes in."

Oh, I just came across this very pithy quote from Milan Kundera in a recent issue of the Village Voice. It speaks to what we just discussed as well as what will follow, "Imposing form on a period of time is what beauty demands, but so does memory. For

what is formless cannot be grasped, or committed to memory."

Networkers do not often mention beauty, though, do they?

Yes, exhibiting is important to me. It is another form of contact presented in a context perhaps more easily grasped by those viewers not directly involved with the net.

Moreover, the documentation of such exhibitions is important to me. My show was transitory. Much less ephemeral are the catalogue and boxed set of rubber stamps produced in conjunction therewith. These traces of events and experiences are the raw material for the mill of network history. History being largely myth, I am casting my bread upon the waters to become what it may.

Years ago when I had an exhibition, I designed and installed it myself. My only audience consisted of those who actually attended. Now, I am working at a distance for shows I will not see. My audience has expanded beyond the viewer and out into the network itself. Working at such remove, it is important to have faith in those mounting the show. My strong relationship with the Stamp Art Gallery folks allows for that. In fact, I am just back from a lively romp with Bill Gaglione, Darlene Domel, John Held, Diana Mars, et al., at the Stamp Art Publications Fluxfest in New York City. As things

stand now, I would only undertake a taxing project like this exhibition for a good friend or upon such a friend's recommendation. You and this interview are one example. Guy Bleus is another. We are exploring tentative plans for a Tensetendoned retrospective at his Hasselt space in 1997.

RJ : You touched the subject of "network history". A lot has been written already in books and magazines. How much is true of what you have read? What is your experience?

reply on 28-8-1996

MC : History may be many things, but it certainly isn't truth. Truth is stranger than fact. So, while I do try to read as much of the history of the early network as I can find, I am aware it is an author's personal interpretation seen through the lens of time and culture.

That last is key. The concepts behind networking have changed with time, but personal interests and experience drive the individual networker and hence the net entire.

Today there are many who view the network as based upon underground, anarchic, and ahistorical principles. Actually, these are the concerns of the second wave of the net activity and the surrounding cultural climate during the 1960s. I understand how this appeals to the rebellious adolescent lurking within all of us. However, I find my own network

spiritual roots a decade and more earlier when mail art was indeed art and historically aware.

So, people seize upon the version of networking tradition that suits their taste and needs. This is why so many heterogeneous views coexist. As network history piles up, these will multiply accordingly.

You asked about my personal experience. I must say written reports of events I have participated in have been reasonably accurate from my point of view. Of course, the historical legacy of present activity is as yet unknown.

Networking activities and artforms are currently marginalized at best. Cavellini's self-historification made for network legend, but did not make a dent in traditional modern art history. His goal eluded him. Such marginalization may or may not change in the future. History is fickle. Who knows where anyone will end up?

Network history is a muddled field. A case in point is Carlo Battisti. I believe his name is largely unknown outside of his native Italy. He was briefly involved with the net during the 1970s. Yet, he created the seminal "ARTE" rubber stamp and originated the mail art bull tradition as an homage to Cavellini, who himself did much to popularize his own later version. I am still glossing both men's work today.

History, like art, is mythic. The powerful open secret is that you can make your own. Do.

RJ : History will be based on facts that historians can find back. In mail art the more active participants in the network automatically build an archive. Do you consider your collection also an archive? Do you keep most of the mail you get?

reply on 12-10-1996

MC : I take your statement to mean historians will base their observations upon that which survives. True. This is why it is so important to have the original material preserved. Perception changes with the times. We do not look at a 13th century work with 13th century eyes or minds. Antique fakes seem so blatant to us today because they were created to satisfy contemporary expectations. Those of the present day were beyond the forger's ken. The raw stuff of our pursuit must be available to the fresh eyes that will follow.

I believe I mentioned my dismal failure as a wannabe archivist. I just don't have the temperament for it. My collection is more of a hoard. I tend to think of an archive as systematically filed and catalogued. While I have separate caches of mail art books, stickers, and artistamps; I cannot call this organization of any significance. I will have to leave the rest to the real archivists.

We previously covered the question of what I keep, no?

RJ : Yes, we did already discussed that issue. We have been doing this interview now for almost 1,5 year. Probably it is time to let others read these words as well. Normally I ask the interviewed person if I did forget to ask something. So, Did I?

reply on 6-1-1997

MC : Only you can say for sure.

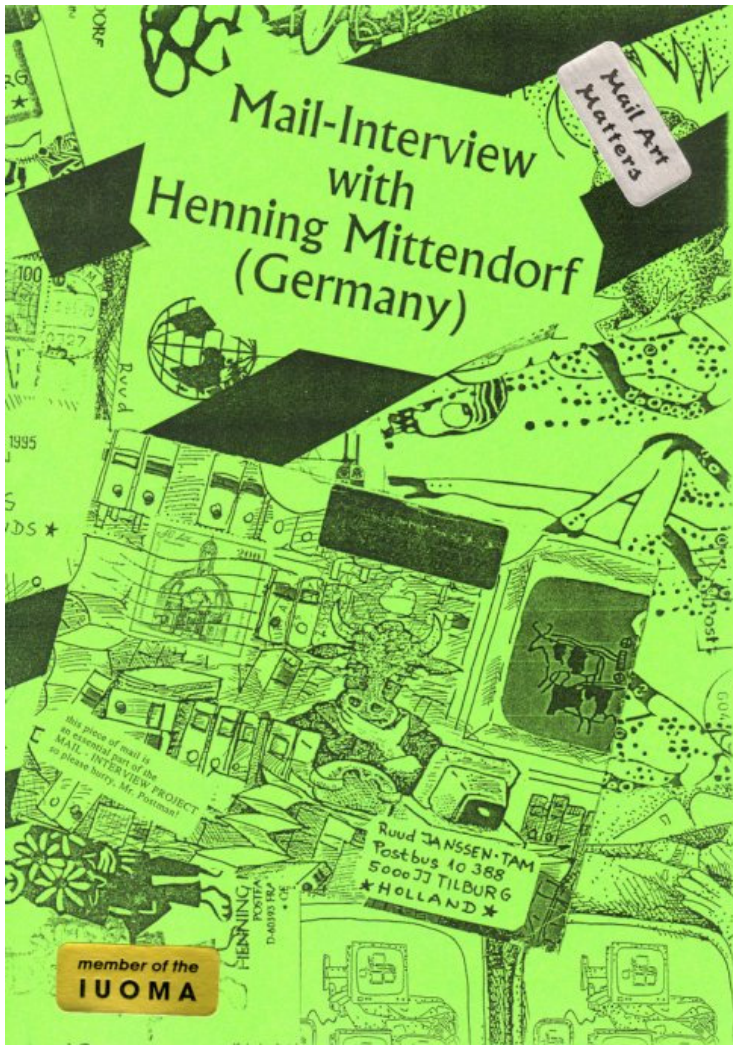
I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for inviting me to participate in your interview project and the readers for their kind attention, especially in forbearance during my flightier moments.

RJ : Thank you for this interview Michael!

**Overview of some more covers of Mail-
Interviews that got published in booklet
format – PART 2**

COVER E.F. HIGGINS – III (USA)





COVER HENNING MITTENDORF (GERMANY)

MAIL-ART AND THE COMPUTER
PRINT-OUTS

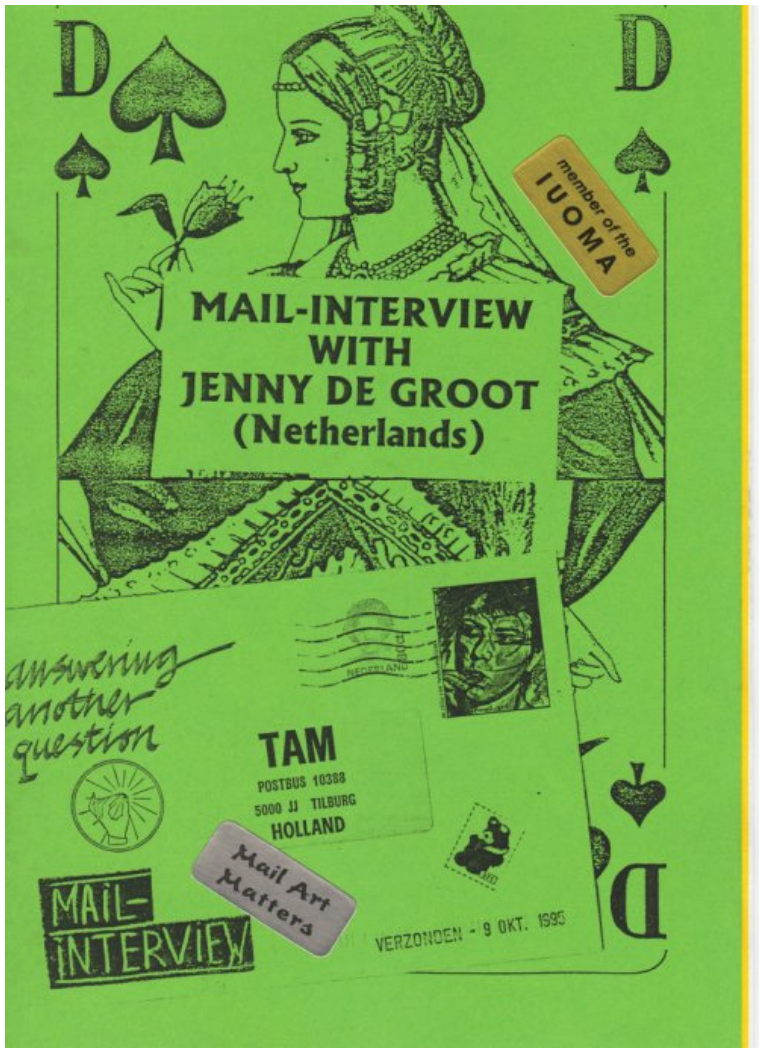
MAIL-INTERVIEW
WITH LITSA SPATHI
(PART-2 VISUAL)



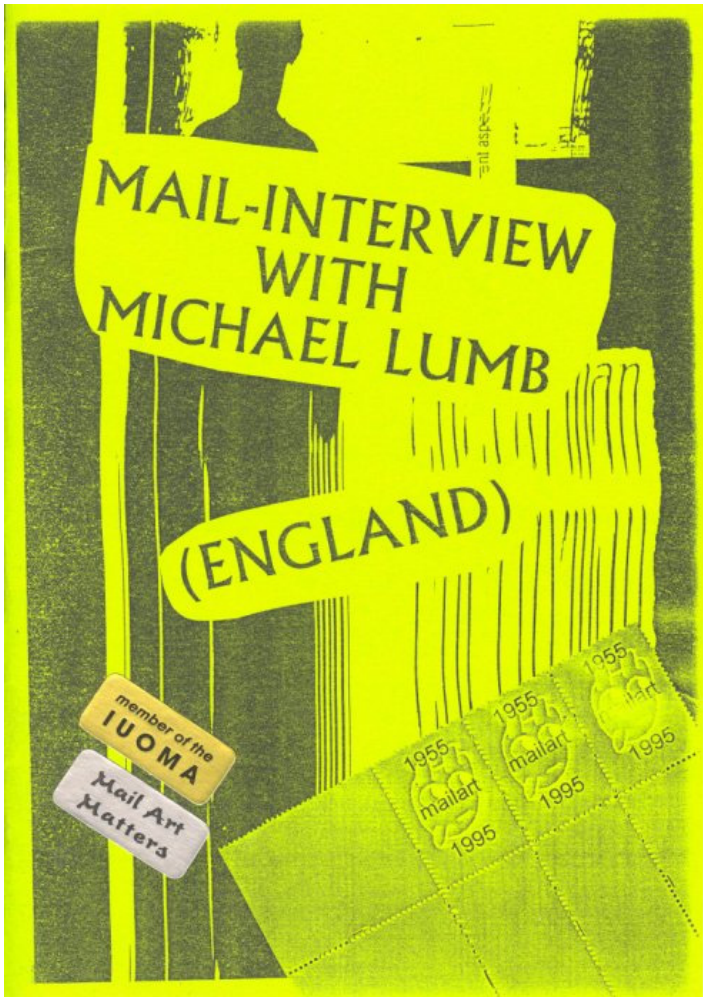
e-mail : tam@dds.nl

URL : <<http://www.geocities.com/Paris/4947/index.html>>

COVER LITSA SPATHI (GERMANY)



COVER JENNY DE GROOT (NETHERLANDS)



COVER MICHAEL LUMB (UK)

In the previous books the covers of the original publications were never reprinted. In this final book about the Mail-Interview some of the covers are reprinted again. The next sample is of the interview with Mark Greenfield (UK). These covers are mostly collages made on A3 format and then reduced to A4 size.



The Mail-Interview Project started end 1994 where mail-artists are interviewed through different communications forms like mail, fax, cassettes and E-mail. The results are published in printed form too, and what you see here is the result of one of those interviews.

Ruud Janssen - TAM

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MARK GREENFIELD – UK

THE MAIL-INTERVIEW WITH M. GREENFIELD (UK)

Started on: 6-4-1995

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: 26-04-95

Mark Greenfield: I began in the seventies corresponding with various friends. At that time I was an art student, much of what was discussed was about art, many times including examples, sometimes illustrating the envelope. However it was not until the late eighties that I read an article in one of the art magazines I was subscribing to, about 'mail art' and took part in a 'mail art' project. Since then I've taken part in many others, ran projects myself and extended my 'network' greatly. There are numerous reasons why I take part in mail art.

Firstly the need to communicate with other art minded people and a general need to communicate. The stimulus provided by mail art is another important factor. For example I enjoy exploring and discovering of one does 'A' what happens to 'B' and so forth. It is a 'living' art, it also makes use of new media and I see much potential for mail art.

RJ : Could you tell a bit more about the first projects you have done. How did they come about and what were they about?

Reply on : 11-05-1995

MG: The first mail art project I organized was disappointing because it relied on another person, who later told me they hated the work, did not follow the instructions, and therefore the response was exceedingly poor. However I've recently totally revamped this project and am changing this disappointment into a success. As it is presently ongoing I can't tell you much about this project as it would effect the outcome.

My second project was called the Umbrella Project. The idea was inspired by Christo Javacheffs Umbrella Project and I invited artists to send art as a response to his project. Would people know about Christo's project? Staged in USA and Japan, other countries could hear/see this project only by mass media communication, TV, Newspaper , and radio. How successful would this be? Would people for example in the (then) USSR hear of this project? Hopefully I honoured my part of the agreement by sending out the documentation to all participants. At the time of the project I had a lot of interest from external parties, promising this and that, I even gave a nearly hour long interview to The Guardian Newspaper, an important major newspaper in Great Britain.

As you are probably aware, in the USA Lori Kevil-Mathews was tragically killed when high winds blew a Christo Umbrella across a road crushing her against a boulder. Christo closed the project early out of respect for the victim. In Japan Massaki Nakamura was killed while trying to remove a closed Christo

Umbrella, the cranes arm touching a 65.000 Volt high tension wire. Obviously all the external parties interest in my project fairly disappeared totally.

My next project was the 'Y' project. A lot of my art has spoken about war. Mail art did not seem to be talking about the ongoing war in Yugoslavia. I wrote to every Yugoslavian mail artist address I could find. To provoke a response I supplied a poem by B. Webster that I titled Yugoslavia. I asked the artists to comment on and contribute any views about the poem. The outcome was seven replies, these were of different view points and the seven were sufficient for me to publish a small booklet titled Y. Most projects seem to end at the documentation, but this was not the case with 'Y'. I sent the booklet to all participants and other Yugoslavian artists, the rest I sent to other mail artists in various parts of the world. The resulting correspondence was exceptional, the subject could not be ignored. It has been suggested to me by one Serbian artist that its time to do another 'Y'. As yet the first one has definetly not finished!

Mail art projects are only a very small fraction of what I consider my mail art activities. By far the most important factor to me is the regular communication between certain artists. The term 'project' seems to only mean the invite and response projects. A lot of my ideas are experiments with mail art. For example I would not class my LA BOHÈME ART xeroxzine as a mail art 'project'

RJ : Tell me more about the ideas that you call 'experiments with mail art'.

Reply on : 26-5-1995

MG: In mail art we already have the tried, tested, and almost traditional format of the mail art project, and we have many mail art traits which we accept as standard, but I believe mail art is still very young, its full potential nowhere realized. It is only by experimenting that we can try to discover the potential of a new art language.

It is a complex subject for me to discuss what actually is an artists 'drive' to discover. Perhaps its to do with modern arts freedom and I'm trying to ascertain if there are boundaries. There is also a form of discovery which is a kind of learning adventure for our self just for enjoyment. Maybe I'm trying to find the most effective use of art possible. The list of motives is probably inexhaustible, whatever the reason, the drive to discover does exist within and the only way to satisfy this desire to make new discoveries is by experimentation.

RJ : You seem to be quite fond of the "Please add to and return" principle. What is the reason for that?

Reply on: 8-6-1995

MG: Both the add & pass and the add & return have produced some excellent results. However a lot of the add & pass pieces get lost in the network. A mail artist who has added to several of my add & pass booklets may be frustrated if they have never received anything from me in return, but the ONLY reason I have not sent the artist anything is because I have not had any of the add & pass pieces with their art on returned to me. With the add & return principle it is between two individuals, if one decides not to add to, the other artist knows where the art is, can ask why or decide to let the other artist keep the piece, and so forth.

The add and pass seem to take a long time to reach the final participant and be returned. With add & return normally the piece is passed fairly quickly between two individuals. I enjoy the idea of one or more artist collaborating together on one piece of art, the result is nearly always exciting.

RJ : How do you feel about chain-letters? Do you participate in them too?

Reply on 28-6-1995

MG: Chain letters cause great distress particularly to the very young and the elderly, and I have personally witnessed this suffering, so there is obviously no way I would want to get involved with anything remotely associated with chain letters.

When chain mail art letters (cmal) first started they were just an extension of mail art, and as I was new to mail art at that time I posted them on in the way suggested, but even then I was a bit concerned with the obvious relation to chain letters. When threats started appearing on the cmal, then I no longer took part. All threats ended in my special bin and from then on I took no further part in any cmal, with or without threats. A lot I would return to the person who sent them with a note saying I was not interested in cmal.

I was surprised to find my name was already added to some of the lists on cmal and someone had even photocopied my rubber stamp on to one. I don't understand the relevance of sending me cmal with my name already on, probably the sender was so busy bulk Xeroxing they did not bother to read what they were sending.

The craze of cmal however seems to have almost died out. At the height of the craze every other piece of mail seemed to contain a cmal invite, now it is extremely rare for me to receive any cmal.

It is possible that the reason cmal have now decreased to such an extent is because it doesn't seem to work, as I said my name was on a number of cmal yet I've never had one piece of mail art due to cmal as far as I'm aware.

RJ : You also like to use the copier for another kind of work you do, the collages with one or more colors that you then copy (in one-color or full-color) in a little edition, then sign and number them. What is the idea about these works. They sometimes look like puzzles and are wonderful to look at.....

Reply on 28-7-1995

MG: I love colour. Colour has its own existence, it possesses a beauty of its own. Colour is part of our world. I find the colourful presentation of magazines, comics, posters, and advertising exciting. I adore the colours and imagery of food packaging etc. Neon signs, television, film etc. all these are exciting. Most are things which inspire pop artists, I love Pop art. A lot of pop artists based their art on cheap mass produced products. My collages are made in a similar way to how some pop artists made their collages. However perhaps my main difference to the pop artists presentation of their work is that I change my collages back into cheap mass produced product. I could easily produce a Xerox off in thousands, and they are fairly cheap. However another element I add to my art is to number the pieces, which then states although this could be a cheap mass produced

product it is actually only available in a limited number, and at that, only a very small number.

RJ : You always undersign your letters with M. or M. Greenfield; never your first name. What is the reason for that?

Reply on : 15-8-1995

MG: An unusual question! I do not remember signing M. Greenfield on any mail art letters. The only reason I use just M is for ultimate informal!

At one time I did use M. Greenfield in all projects and did not give out my first name or any personal details. When I first got involved with mail art there were quite a lot of persons using pseudonyms, some using the name of an object as a name. One of the qualities of mail art is it is not necessary for the receiver to know any personal details of the sender. The sender does not also need to know any personal details of the person they are sending to. The amount of personal details you give out is a matter of 'choice' for each individual mail artist, like I said this can be none. This should avoid any discriminations. There should be no discrimination in mail art. However perhaps it is far less discrimination when you know the full personal details of the mail artists and the receiver or sender still decides to have no discrimination.

I discovered too many people know my first name for it to continue being a secret, and after consideration it did not appear relevant to keep it secret.

RJ : You say that it is a matter of 'choice' for each individual mail artist how much personal details they are sending out. For me it depends on the receiver how much personal details I send out because it is a two-way communication. So if I receive personal

information, I normally also send out personal information. Your choice seems to be not to send out that many personal details (although I noticed some changes over the years). Is it possible to send out even 'no' personal information? Doesn't the art you send out show a lot of personal details for the receiver?

Reply on 31-8-1995

MG: This all depends on your definition of personal details. My art does communicate a kind of personal details to a certain extent. You can tell from my art what appeals and interests me, sometimes my personal viewpoint on a subject can be strongly expressed.

I suppose it is possible to psychoanalyze a piece of art. You could predict what an artists personality is like from what colours they use, 'how' the artist 'creates', their technique and style.

I cannot tell from a piece of art (apart from a few exceptions" whether the artist is married or not, whether they have children, what religion they are, what political party they vote for, and other similar kinds of details, which were the personal details I was trying to discuss in my previous answer.

You mention that for you it is a two way communication. Although most of my mail art is a two way communication, a large amount of my mail art does not fit into the description and limits of just two way communication. I do not particularly like restrictive statements about mail art.

RJ : I didn't say that mail art is a two way communication. I was only talking about why and when I send out personal details to some of my mail art contacts. But somehow I must admit that this kind

of mail art has gotten the overhand and is more important for me than the taking part in mail art projects. How is this for you. Do you take part in all the mail art projects you receive, or do you select in answering all that enters your P.O.Box?

Reply on 14-9-1995

MG: Due to a recent event this is a good question to follow on from the previous two. I have received an invite to do art work for a project supporting a political party. I am vehemently opposed to the political party involved and there is no way I would do anything in any way to support them. So as another statement to add to your questions about personal details. I would add that although I would not hate anyone because of their beliefs, this does not mean I support or believe the same. I might even strongly disagree with those beliefs.

I would not consider taking part in a project where they ask for money. A recent example of this is a French artist invited me to take part in his project expecting you to pay to be in a type of booklet that he is arranging.

I now also do not take part in projects by total newcomers who just send a B+W Xerox flyer inviting me to take part in their project and this is the only mailing I've ever had from them.

Certainly, I'm now quite selective about which projects I take part in and this answer is by no means a full and comprehensive list of the numerous reasons why I might not take part in a project.

I am now extremely 'aware' of the amount of loss of art which I've sent out to various projects so I'm now much more careful what I send to.

Having run several projects myself I think one of the main mistakes newcomers make is that they do not set any finance aside for return documentation etc. Even putting together some very basic documentation and return postage I find the cost can be crippling. The cost of sending anything much heavier than a couple of postcards to the USA is ridiculously high, and normally one can expect to get a very good response from the USA. I presume this is similar for newcomers in the USA who find it very expensive to reply to us in Europe, hence probably the reason why I lose so much to USA newcomers (?)

A lot of newcomers send out flyers in which the theme and details are very wide in what you can send and often the deadline is very long so they're probably going to get a very high response which could be very expensive to reply to.

I would like to add that if anyone has taken part in any of my projects and not received any reply please write to me so I can find out why this happened and I will send the relevant documentation.

RJ : It is funny to hear that you think 'you lose your mail art' when there is no reply or documentation. I know of wonderful projects with wonderful exhibitions where the documentation never got finished because of different reasons. In my eyes the project then is a success. We aren't taking part in a project to get a wonderful documentation only are we? Also the most beautiful documentations I have are mostly from newcomers. I guess everybody has a different view about mail art. I have published my views already often. You seem to have not done so in the last years (and this interview will be a nice change). Do you like the mail art statements other mail artists write? How important are words in mail art?

Reply on 4-10-1995

MG: It is insulting having known me for so many years that you could even think that I could possibly do mail art just for the documentation. However, I do not know of any 'wonderful projects with wonderful exhibitions' where there is no documentation. How could I? If these people take my art and do not even bother to send any return. They do not even have the decency to send a postcard acknowledging receipt of my art let alone communicate anything about the project or exhibition itself.

I suppose your argument could be that you with all your travelling have visited a number of these non documented projects, but even if this is your argument not all projects flyers state when the exhibition is and where.

Oh, just in case you are still in the insulting mood, perhaps I had better state that I do not just do mail art for the exhibition. It is not necessary for a mail art project to have an exhibition. In your 'Thoughts about mail art', you yourself state (and I do agree with these statements) "There will always be a balance between what you send and receive. The more energy you send into the network to mail artists, the more energy they will share with you." So you are a really great person to talk about not expecting a return. A bit hypocritical!

Another important factor is what I consider to be documentation. For me to discover what a 'wonderful project and wonderful exhibition' it was, the organizer would have to communicate this with me in some way. The lowest cost form of communication is probably mail, so if the person writes acknowledging receipt of my art and tells me how 'wonderful' etc.

then really I would class this as the extreme minimum of documentation. However I would not like anyone to read this and think that it is normal, it is an exception to normal, it is poor documentation but it is far better than receiving nothing in return.

Although I do not just do mail art for the documentation I suppose I was lucky that the first mail art projects I took part in sent some excellent documentation. I would probably found it very off putting if their returns had been poor and may have been completely put off taking part in future projects.

I strongly disagree about the most beautiful documentations being mainly from newcomers. The best documentation normally is from good artists or someone with a genuine interest in art, it does not matter whether they are a newcomer or a mail art old timer.

To the final part of your question. Words are another tool available to the mail artist, of course they can be very important. The only problem is with writing about mail art many people try to write something resembling a "manifesto" and in trying to do this end up writing a complete load of garbage. Ever heard of the expression 'drowning in pretentious drivel?' The majority of articles written about mail art are pretentious drivel.

I'm also always extremely suspicious about the reasons for these people writing texts about mail art, most of the time the 'reasons' have little to do with mail art,

RJ : I guess you are now trying to insult me because I have written a lot of texts about mail-art in the last years. But in this interview it is not the place to fully

explain why I write about mail art. Writing ABOUT mail art has nothing to do practicing mail art, but both fit together. The same goes for the mail art I make for a project, the exhibition, and third: the documentation. They fit together but yet they are different things. After I mailed my piece of mail art for a project the action from my part ends. A mail art project is a process, and sometimes the process is stopped because of reasons that are not controllable for the organizer. Well, I felt I had to react to your answer with some personal thoughts, but for the interview I rather ask you a completely new question. You mention 'The lowest cost form of communication is probably mail', but there is a new communication form: e-mail. I can send out 5 e-mail letters to the USA for the costs of one single air-mail letter of 20 gram. It seems in USA a lot of networkers have entered the internet's e-mail. What are your views about this communication-form?

Reply on 1-11-1995

MG: My answer about texts was sincere. E-mail is again another tool. It is a very costly tool to set up. I like the fact that mail art has a potential for full international. E-mail alone would deny the opportunity for people less financially well off. I'm sure we both know peoples for whom it is a luxury to be able to afford the cost of postage. There is no way these people could afford computers, modems, printers.

E-mail is also irrelevant to me because most of the artists that I regularly keep in contact with do not have access to the facilities for E-mail.

If the e-mail artist wishes to ignore me and not communicate with me, then that is their loss. Most people who use E-mail and have a genuine desire to communicate, normally do so in more than one way,

for example by snail-mail and E-mail. E-mail is another tool available for communication.

RJ : With your latest answer you included the flyers in which you ask people to return the 'large Marilyn envelopes'. I remember of some time ago that we also used to exchange the Marilyn-poster. Why are you so fascinated with her, and what was (is) this project about?

Reply on 22-11-1995

MG: The Marilyn Monroe idea is not a mail art project. It was an idea to do some collaboration art between some of my best mail art friends (the word 'some' is important, I definitely missed at least three).

The flyers I sent out do not ask for participants to take part in a mail art project, they ask for the return of a few of these art pieces that went astray. A few of my friends due to the fact that I do so many add and pass pieces of art apparently thought these also were. A couple of others still remain lost in a pile of mail waiting to be returned by the artists concerned.

The first idea came about because I am a 'bargain hunter'. I enjoy purchasing a useful quality products for next to nothing. A bookshop was selling off extremely cheap posters, several of which were Marilyn Monroe posters. I decided that these had potential for a good add to piece. Later I produced my own 'start' xerox posters of Marilyn Monroe.

Why do we love the Marilyn Monroe image? Please read any of the numerous books written about Marilyn Monroe. Its far too complex magic to explain here. The legend is still as strong as ever. The public are still fascinated with everything to do with Marilyn Monroe.

Several Pop Artists created art with Marilyn Monroe as the subject, the most famous image is by Andy Warhol. One of my Marilyn Monroe art pieces is a reworking of a Marilyn Monroe image by Willem De Kooning.

I wanted to produce new versions of Marilyn Monroe for the new Millennium. It is all to do with M!! I also liked the idea that the Marilyn Monroe image is seen as being related to Pop art because my art is a development from Pop art. Perhaps this is something I wanted to say. It is difficult to write critically about your own work. I wanted to produce colourful, exciting, sexy, mail art.

RJ : Were you active in the DNC (Decentralized Networker Congress) in 1992? Have you had some encounters with other mail artists?

Reply on 15-11-1995

MG: Ah, I suppose the reason I'm being asked this question is because I took such a strong stance on this subject. However the person you should be asking this question is Keith Bates. Keith wrote a very good text on this subject in one of his project documentations.

At the time a Switz guy had an idea that 1992 was going to be Networking Congress year. This was well published and got blown out of all proportions by the self important group of text writers!!! 1992 was the year of mail art visiting, the year of mail art tourism. Quite frankly it got completely out of hand, to the extent that total strangers felt that they could turn up on my doorstep and expect to have a place to stay. In some cases I'd had absolutely no prior contact with the person in anyway whatsoever.

I hate dictatorship, some 'people' had decided that they were going to enforce that 1992 was Networking Congress Year and what this meant and that I had no say or control on this subject! Sorry Guys, I'm a strong believer in Freedom of choice.

I'm very protective of my family and there was no way I wanted these strangers, some of whom were total weirdoes, coming scarring my family, especially whilst I was out. Also my house is fairly small and I've not got the finance to 'support' these visitors. Another point is that I just did not want to meet these people.

I did not believe that this meeting or visiting other people was an important part of mail art. In a matter of fact I thought it was completely irrelevant! It is not a necessary part of mail art. Keith Bates text made this very clear.

I produced a single sheet based on Keith text. I used a section of his text headed 'Networker Statement', a few other sentences from his text, some relevant visuals, and to this I added the statement 'I agree with Keith Bates'. I Xeroxed one hundred copies originally, although now the total I have Xeroxed must be over a thousand copies. What I did was to put his statement all on one side of an A4 size paper, this made it 'user friendly' and I know that a number of people also copied and used my version of Keith's text.

Certainly I'm not opposed to this visiting or meeting but it has to be in the right way 'asking and receiving an invitation being part of the process'.

RJ: So, did you ever meet another mail artist? How was it like?

Reply on 5-1-1996

MG: I think it would be extremely difficult to be a serious practicing artist for as many years as I've been, not to meet any artists. However I do not wish to "list" here all the artists I have met and do not want to comment on what I thought of those meetings.

As to the future I would like to meet artists whom I have more affinity with. Certainly the artists I most respect in mail art I have not met yet, I think this may change in the coming year. I just hope by meeting that I do not destroy some excellent friendships.

RJ : This is actually quite interesting. Most contacts by mail give a certain "view" about the person one is writing to. When both meet it can be that the "view" is just an illusion and was made up in ones head and that the mail only showed a part of the life of the mail artist. On the other hand the "view" might be even more beautiful in reality than one could imagine.... But OK, lets focus on you rather than the other mail artists. I also have a certain view about you with the mail & art I get from you. Are there also things you do which has nothing to do with mail art and is interesting to know?

Reply on 26-1-1996

MG: The question you ask is too unspecific. There are lots of aspects of my life which could be of interest, most of my life and family has nothing to do with mail art. But I think that what you are trying to imply is what art do I do that has nothing to do with mail art?

The term "nothing to do with" mail art may be incorrect to use concerning pieces of my art which are not mail art. Of the pieces that I create which are

not mail art, they are actually normally related nowadays to my mail art.

Probably one of the last sculptures I produced was called "Soldier Box". From the title you can guess that this is connected to the subject of the 'Y' project. This sculpture however was not intended to be about just Yugoslavia but about wars in general. The wax medium of the soldiers I found made it a fairly unmailable piece of art, because the wax was too brittle.

A lot of the art that I produce which is not mail art is also related to my mail art because it is very similar, "it's just not mailed". I love the Xerox medium and use this in several ways, for example to produce single sheet pieces of art, to producing booklets. Booklets in particular I will use various printing methods, again these I will also use in mail art. Another method I have recently used to create art is collage, and again this medium I obviously make use of in mail art.

RJ : Well, an unspecific question mostly reveals a lot about the thoughts of the one that is interviewed through his answer. As you will have noticed the interviews I do aren't just questionnaires, I would like to see what someone makes a mail artist, and what it means for someone to be a mail artist. Some artists are only involved in the network for a specific time-period and after exploring it they leave. Others get 'hooked for life' to the unexpected communication that arrives at ones mailbox. What is the case for you? You could answer with "I don't know", but I am curious to the essence of what mail art brings for you?

Reply on 20-2-1996

MG: The answer is that I'm so extremely busy creating art and enjoy this creation that there is little time to contemplate the future of mail art. I never know what the future holds! If there is an end to mail art then I'm sure we'll know about it when it gets near! We all have a restricted time span in so much as we will all die one day, so it is not possible to do mail art forever.

Much of my present art is a form of communication by mail and I would like to think that I could always remain friends and in contact with some of the persons that I have had very good contact with.

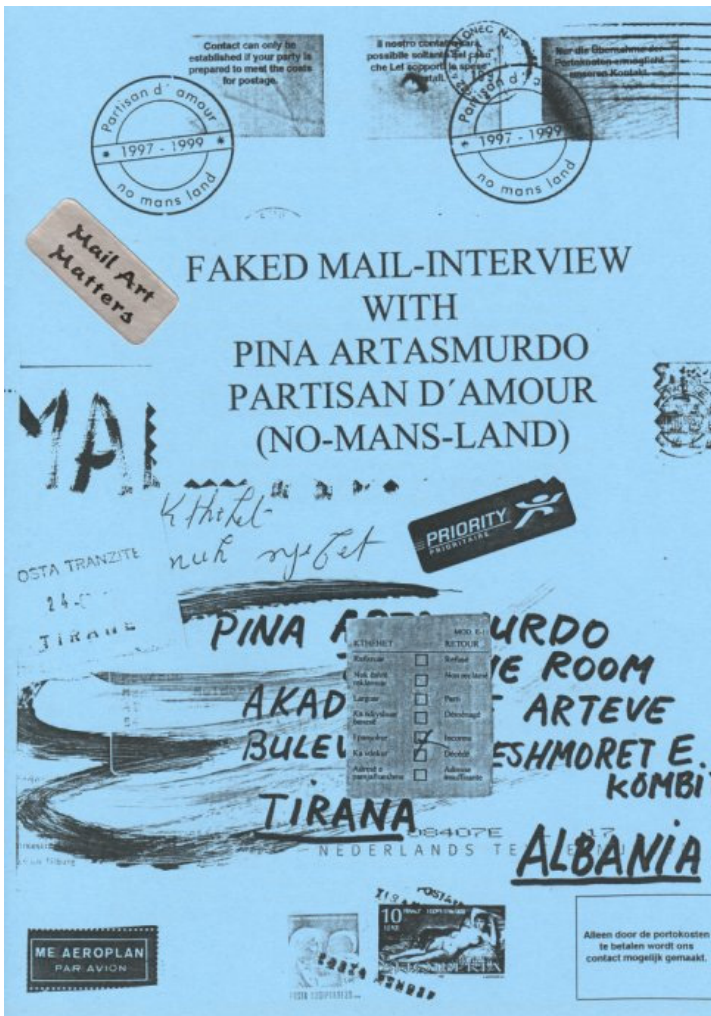
The format of my art will probably change. At present I'm enjoying producing xeroxes and rubber stamping and all the other various methods I use in my mail art. If a new format or method became available which I was able to enjoy using artistically then I would use it. I could give up xeroxing and the formats I presently use. I like the freedom to use whatever medium I want whenever I want.

There is a far larger audience available rather than just other mail artists. By communicating with only other mail artists we are only communicating with the "converted", and many of the people I keep in regular contact with have similar views to myself on a range of subjects as well as art. If a more effective way of communicating my art to a wider audience became available to me, I would use this, but as previously stated I would like to stay in contact with some of the people I'm presently communicating with.

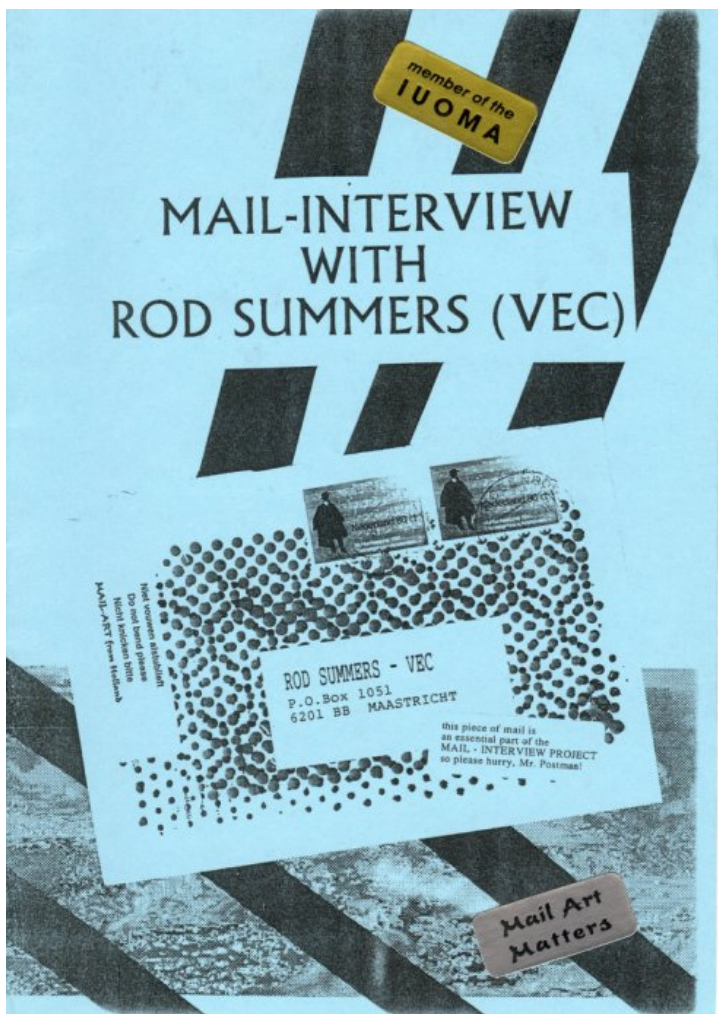
RJ : Well, I guess this is a good moment to end the interview. I sure hope that we will stay in contact and

will exchange our ideas and art. Thank you for this interview Mark!

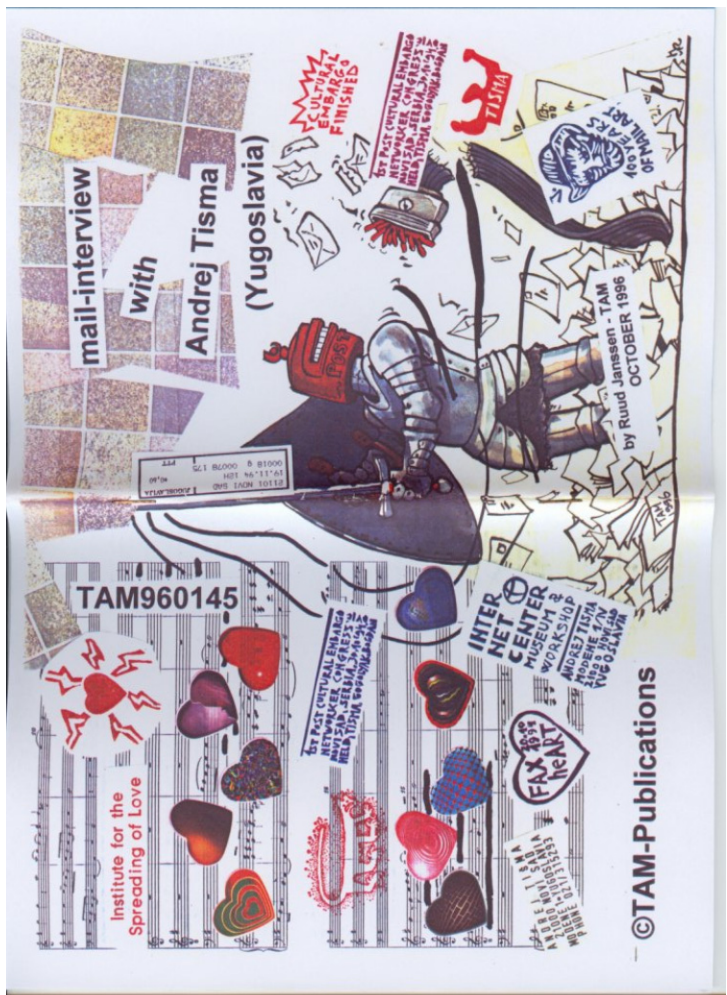
**Overview of some more covers of Mail-
Interviews that got published in booklet
format – PART 3**



COVER PINA ARTASMURDO (ALBANIA)



COVER ROD SUMMERS (NETHERLANDS)



COVER ANDREJ TISMA (YUGOSLAVIA)

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.

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



go

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.

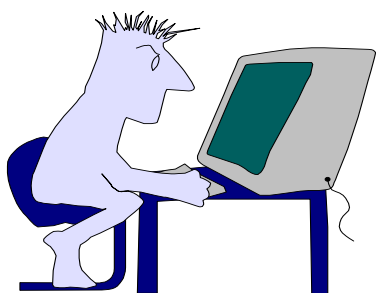
The publishing of this first booklet reminded me of the fact that it was the beginning of a larger series, so the cost factor was involved. Not only the interviewed artists would be interested in the interviews, in fact the whole mail art network would like to read them. These factors lead to the situation 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.

Publishing on the WWW

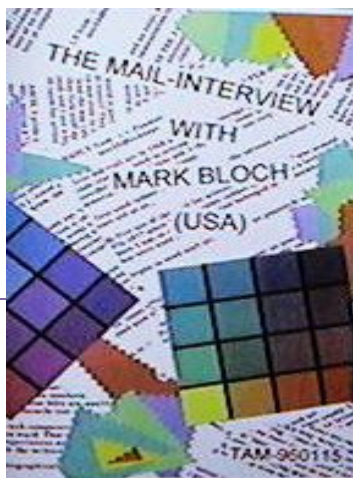
Vittore Baroni published his interview as a special edition of ARTE POSTALE! , and the interviews with Tim Mancusi & Guy Bleus will be published by The Sticker Dude (Joel) in New York , USA. As time passes by more experiments will be undertaken. To give you an idea, the upcoming interview with Jonathan Stangroom will contain in it a specially made copy-art work by Jonathan himself.



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 artifacts 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

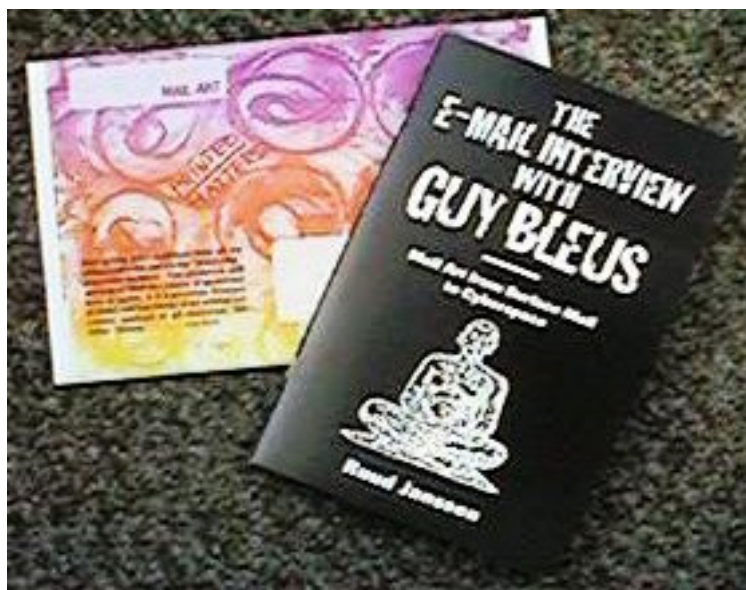


question to start an interview on their own which I would include in the series. As you can see in the next year those interviews came out as well.

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 artifacts also, and that would make a nice documentation.

Second plan is to exhibit the complete artifacts 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 realized. 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. Preperation 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. Perneckzy 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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