

### ***Mail Art/ists Books***

Mail Art – also known as postal art and communication art – is defined as any form of art sent through a postal system. Initiated in the early 1940s by Ray Johnson, this medium was eagerly embraced by Fluxus artists in the late 1960s, subsequently becoming a worldwide network. Many artists embraced its possibilities in projects and exhibitions in the 1980s and 90s. Recently, under the worldwide Covid lockdown, artists have rediscovered its communicative strength.

Advances in telecommunications have resulted in mail art embracing new ways of ‘sending’ artworks. Beyond stamped envelopes, telegrams, faxes, and more recently digital email messages, SMSes and WhatsApp texts now enable image messaging. In addition, the type of *art* sent through the postal system has expanded dramatically over the years to include postcards, postage stamps, rubber stamp marks, Xeroxed copies, pamphlets, brochures, decorated envelopes and other ephemera. The title of the exhibition *Mail Art/ists Books*, intimates another innovation of the medium through its creative morphing into the genre of artists’ books.

This exhibition showcases works from the collection of mail art donated recently to the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts by Cheryl Penn, those from Kim Lieberman’s practice, the quirky types of ‘mail’ of Walter Battiss and his imaginary Fook Island, and a selection of mail art by international and local artists.

## *Walter Battiss and Mail Art*

The Walter Battiss Archive is expansive and comprehensive. The major body of materials that make up the Archive, and which have been acquired from the Battiss Estate, is now located at the Jack Ginsberg Centre of Book Arts. It consists of numerous letters, diaries, and sketchbooks, along with diverse documents and ephemera.

The repository of the research which Battiss conducted on Southern African Rock Art, is now housed at the Origin Centre at Wits. Supplementing these two parts are the Murray Schoonraad correspondence (JGCBA), the Dacre Punt correspondence (Unisa), and the documents at the Walter Battiss Museum in Somerset East.

Many unfamiliar aspects of the creative output of Battiss are slowly emerging from this expansive Archive, including his poetry, his photography and his performance pieces. This exhibition focuses on the various forms of Mail Art in which Battiss indulged. These forms are displayed here and through his protracted, imaginary Fook island performance, ranging from cleft sticks with Fook scripted messages to aerograms dispatched from hot air balloons.

- Wilhelm van Rensburg

## 1. Fook Fan Mail



'Fookians' is a term Jack Ginsberg ascribes to the quirky names Walter Battiss often invented for the inhabitants of his imaginary Fook Island. The term, 'Fook Fans', however, refers to those people most receptive to Battiss's wry sense of humour. Norman Catherine could be considered his Number One fan, expanding the material culture of Fook Island considerably with his inventive Fook animals, Fook Olympic postcards, and Fook stamps. It was during Battiss's two visits to the United States in 1976 and 1979, that he cultivated a serious following, chiefly among the youth in search of an alternative lifestyle. His association with them, in Colorado and during a long trip through the Arizona Desert is captured evocatively in *Fook Book II*. The Walter Battiss archive contains fan letters from his acquaintances, often with interesting art works, such as those by Gerrit Hillhorst, 'Dennis' and Jenny Christie.

## 2. Walter Battiss and Fook Mail Art



Fook Mail Art was a natural offshoot of Walter Battiss's protracted happening and/or performance throughout the 1970s, commonly known as Fook Island. The inception of Fook Island is commonly believed to have occurred in November 1971 when the ideal of a 'fake island' purportedly came to Battiss while walking back to his hotel from yet another conceptual exhibition in London. 'Concepts. You write them down on bits of paper and pin them up. You can't see any object or anything" Battiss related to Barry Davidow in 1979. "So I decided while walking up Alymer Road that I'll make up the concept of an island. The concept will become real. It won't be just a selfish thing that an artist makes up and pins unto the wall, but something that everyone can participate in. That will make this island real, although it is a fake island. I then rushed upstairs and looked under 'F' in the London directory and found the name 'Fook'. A veritable material culture resulted, with objects abounding, alluding to many practices and rituals performed during its lifespan: Fook banners and flags and ceremonial sceptres, Fook currency with notes and coins, Fook postage stamps first day covers, postcards and even cleft sticks. Battiss arguably became the first mail artist in South Africa.

## 3. Walter Battiss: *Cook's Bay – Moorea, Tahiti*



"By the time [Walter] Battiss visited Tahiti and Moorea [between September 1978 and May 1979] they were both very much tourist destinations. He made a number of consummate watercolours of the looming pinnacle maintains and the verdant tropical vegetation of the island of Moorea, which rises vertically out of the ocean. In [this] work, entitled *Cook's Bay Moorea* (1978), the sea is rendered in soft blues, pinks and greens and he foregrounds a number of pleasure crafts in this dramatic and idyllic bay. This image is later used on the stamps minted for Fook Island. The *30 Zook Fook*

*Island* stamp replicates the image of Cook's Bay and creates a direct link between the islands of Moorea,

Tahiti, and his fertile imagination, which, along with his collective memory of many islands visited, gave rise to the notion of Fook.”

Karel Nel (2016) “Rock Pools and islands: The Imaginative Landscape of Walter Battiss, The King of Fook” In: Warren Siebrits (2016) *Walter Battiss: 'I invented myself' The Jack Ginsberg Collection*. An Ampersand Foundation publication, page 310.

#### 4. Andrew Verster



Visiting Paris and London in 1985, Andrew Verster (1937 – 2020) cut up one of his art works (*Mère et Fillette*) in twelve postcard size pieces and sent them intermittently back from these two cities to the Director of the National Society of Art Gallery in Durban, who received all of them, and later gave them back to Verster. A typical example of Mail Art, the work bears testimony to the trust and efficiency of the mailing system of that time.

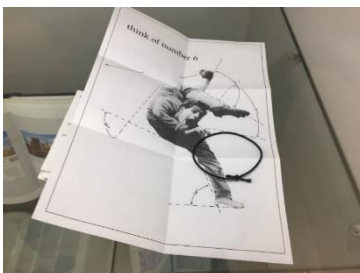
#### 5. Dada South?



Concluding the seminal exhibition, *Dada South?* at Iziko; South African National Gallery in Cape Town, 2009/2010, curators Roger van Wyk and Kathryn Smith posted various pieces of ephemera to the art community. The large-scale envelope contained, among other things, a magnificent timeline (recto), as well as a collaged artwork (verso), juxtaposing manifestations of local, African quasi-Dada artworks with these of the European and American Dadists. In the exhibition, South African artworks from the 1960s to the

then present were exhibited alongside a collection of artworks and publications by historical Dada artists. The juxtaposition invites a fresh enquiry into South African artistic production by highlighting some similarities in method, strategy and imagery, between socially critical South African art and the art of Dada. In *Dada South?* curators Roger van Wyk and Kathryn Smith consider the legacy of socially critical and experimental South African art in relation to the influence of Dada. Many people are familiar with South African ‘resistance art’, produced in the late 1970s to early 1990s, which deals with political subject matter in a direct way. *Dada South?* was a chance to broaden this view to include art which criticises and mocks any political and social forms and institutions. It was also an occasion to reconsider the influence of non-western cultures on Dada activities. Their post-exhibition ‘mail art’ was an attempt to correspond from the periphery to the centre, the upshot being a magnificent publication, *Dada Africa: Dialogue with the Other* (2016).

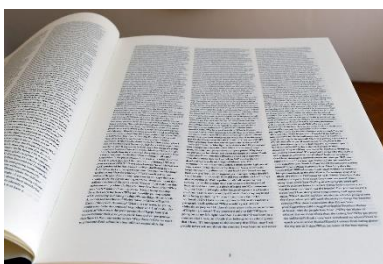
#### 6. John Pepper: Think of Number Six



Think of Number Six is the collective title of a gesamtkunstwerk curated by John Pepper and Bettina Malcomess, exhibited and performed at various venues across South Africa in 2012. The title piece is a set of instructions by ben Patterson, a Fluxus artist, who performed it at the Johannesburg Art Fair on 17 September 2012. Other participating artists included Senzeni Marasela, Penelope Umbrico, Hentie van der Merwe, Susan Greenspan, Claude van Lingen, Mendi + Keith Obadike, Tokolos Stencils, and Ulrike Muller. Each of these artists created unique

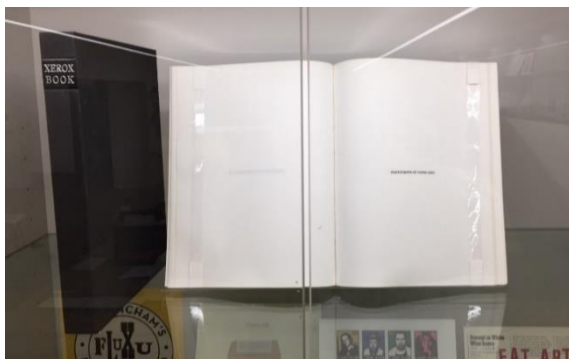
conceptual pieces, illustrated and described in little booklets, which Pepper then sent via the postal system to collectors and other artists.

## 7. *Das Große Buch der Fragen* [*The Big Book of Questions*]



*Das Große Buch der Fragen* [*The Big Book of Questions*] is an artist's character to ask questions. Sooner or later the question comes up: what do other people ask? The Austrian artist Jochen Höller (1977 - ) filtered 333.333 questions asked online and collected them on the book's 1594 pages. Here we can find an enormous catalogue of questions bound for eternity yet many of which might have lost their relevance within days of their asking.

## 8. *Xerox Book*



The first examples of what were to become Fluxusevent scores date back to John Cage's famous class at The New School, where artists such as George Brecht, Al Hansen, Allan Kaprow, and Alison Knowles began to create art works and performances in musical form. One of these forms was the event. Events tend to be scored in brief verbal notations. These notes are known as event scores. In a general sense, they are proposals, propositions, and instructions. Thus, they are sometimes known as proposal pieces, propositions,

or instructions. The first collections of Fluxus event scores were the working sheets for Fluxconcerts. They were generally used only by the artist-performers who were presenting the work. With the birth of Fluxus publishing, however, collections of event scores soon came to take three forms. The first form was the boxed collection. These were individual scores written or printed on cards. The classic example of this boxed collection is George Brecht's *Water Yam*. A second format was the book or pamphlet collection of scores, often representing work by a single artist. Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit* is probably the best known of these collections. Now forgotten, but even more influential during the 1960s, were the small collections that Dick Higgins published in the *Something Else Press* pamphlet series under the *Great Bear* imprint. These small chapbooks contained work by Bengt af Klintberg, Alison Knowles, Nam June Paik, and many other artists working in the then-young Fluxus and intermedia traditions. The booklets were highly portable. Even more important, they were easily copied using what was then the new Xerox technology. As a result, the *Great Bear* pamphlets spread an idea about what art - and performance art - could be to a vast and ever wider circle of artists and critics interested in new ways of working. The third format involved any of several large-format collections, often carrying the work of many artists in neatly typeset columns on a large sheet of paper. The best known of these was the 1966 *Fluxfest Sale Sheet* compiled by George Maciunas as chief editor and publisher of Fluxus. This tradition carried forward the early concert collections in new forms, and these collections included the compilations that Ken Friedman published at Fluxus West in the 1960s, as well as the Fluxus compilations organized and reprinted by other publishers in the 1970s.

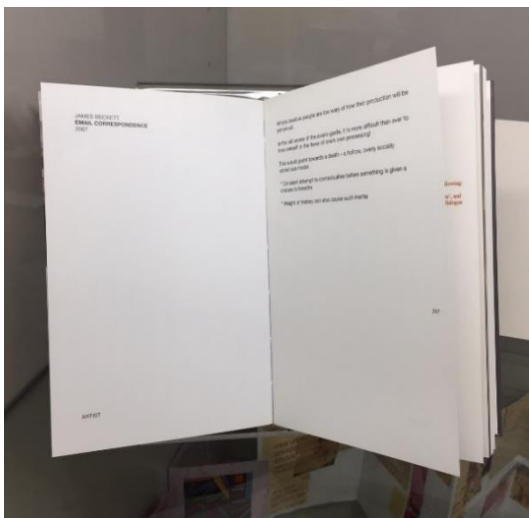
## 9. Fluxus Island



The work is handprinted in silkscreen by

Franticham (Francis Van Maele & Antic-Ham) in the studios from Redfoxxpress in Achill Island, Ireland in 2009. Various Fluxus-themed items are housed in a wooden box (with a slide-out top) made by Hatzel Holzwaren GmbH in Germany while the rubberstamps are made by Ets. Nimax in Luxembourg. The work includes the book *I See Sadness*, bound in printed glass covers; a pamphlet *Fluxus Island Manual* providing details of the contents of the box; and a portfolio of 20 prints in the manner of the artists John Cage, Joseph Beuys, George Brecht, Robert Filliou, Dick Higgins, Ray Johnson, Alison Knowles, George Maciunas, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Dieter Roth, Daniel Spoerri, Ben Vautier & Emmett William.

## 10. Kathryn Smith



Tackling the curious brief given by a number of avant-garde artists of having to produce a 'non-catalogue' for an exhibition of their work at the newly opened SMAC gallery in Stellenbosch in 2007, Kathryn Smith sent out a call, via email, to about eighty people around the world, all involved in the arts, soliciting their views of the nature and significance of the avant-garde in Contemporary Art. The responses – veritable art works, created by image and text – were all sent back to her via email correspondence, which Smith then collated in an artists' book form, called *One Million and Forty-Four Years (and Sixty-Three Days)*. According to a declaration by Fluxus artist, Robert Filliou, January 17, 1963, is Art's Birthday.

Before this day, he maintained, there was no art, but on this day, Art was 1 000 000 years old. Smith simply added the years and days from that date till the opening of the SMAC show.

## 11. Christo Coetzee



A generous British Council grant enabled Christo Coetzee to study in Japan between 1959 and 1960 under the Gutai Art Association, an avant-garde post-World War Two group of young artists. Gutai is the eastern version of the popular Abstract Expressionism in America. A deliberate strategy of the group, aiming to keep the West informed about their art, was to send the Gutai magazine via the postal system to prominent artists and critics in the metropolitan art centres in Europe and

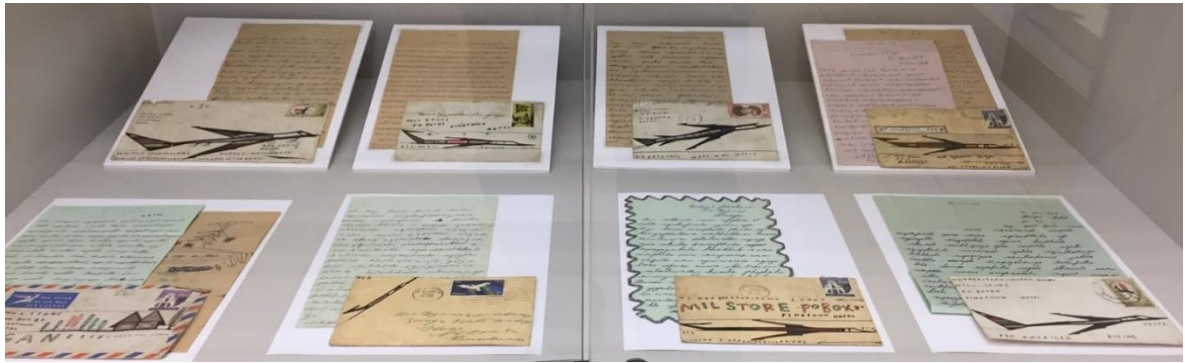
America, as well as miniatures of their work. These miniatures were based on the Japanese new year's tradition of exchanging so-called *nengajo*, well-wishing cards, embellished with their art on the reverse. Coetzee adopted this tradition, not only sending Christmas cards with his artwork on the cover to his family and friends and the collectors of his art, but also decorating the invitations to his exhibitions with original art works.

## 12. MAP



Mounting exhibitions in such unconventional spaces as hotel rooms and restaurants, Modern Art Projects (MAP) was a series of site-specific art events, collaborations, and exhibitions, initiated by restaurateur, Harrie Siertsema. The series were supplemented by MAP's 'black books'. Highly accessible and freely posted to art lovers, these square-format black booklets, with text and images, contextualised these art events, and documented an alternative aspect of South African art history. Close to forty of these booklets were periodically posted, and collectors collated them in the famous 'black box' that served as convenient repository.

### 13. Tito Zungu



Zungu's early works were produced during the late 50s and early 60s and made on the backs of envelopes for himself and the community of migrant labourers around him. Colin Richards points out that Zungu's work seems to be "founded in the impulse to communicate." Not only is it done on the very container/carrier of communication between people (envelopes and letters) it also depicts modes of transport (ships and aeroplanes) and means of broadcast (radios) which signal transmission of news and ideas and which promise interchange between people.



## *Cheryl Penn and Mail Art*

Cheryl Penn mounted the first Mail Art exhibition in South Africa in 2012, titled *Mail Art Makes the World a Town*. She is a conceptual artist and independent contract university lecturer/examiner in the practises of art history, conceptual art practice, creative thinking, and aleatory poetry. Essentially, she is a maker of artists' books which are collected globally. Some of her frequent and varied Mail Art projects morph into artists' books. Her installation, titled *An Encyclopaedia of Everything* was exhibited in November 2014 at the KZNSA and parts of this library have been exhibited in America, France, UK and Russia.

Books are also acquired through international exchange – the collection currently holds the book works of 70 international artists and numbers over 600 *vade mecums* (handbooks or guides that are kept constantly at hand for consultation) on many and varied subjects. The focus of her current output is visual poetry, asemic writing and aleatory verse. She has formulated a complete writing system – which she calls *The Bhubezi Script*.

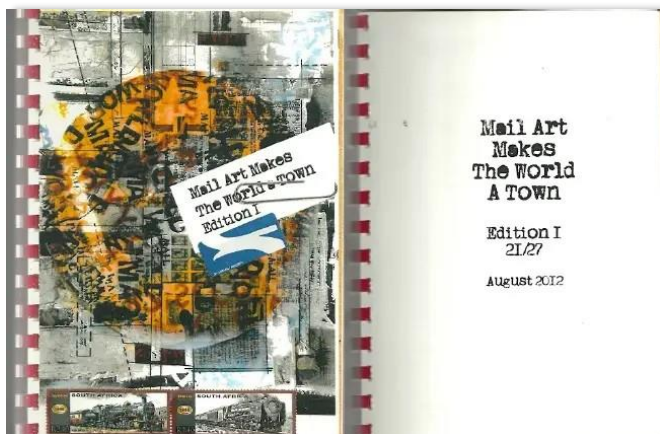
According to Usises Carrión, Mail Art or 'Correspondence Art' is a global cultural strategy which makes use of the postal service. It began in the late 50's/early 60's with artists sending postcards, poems or drawings through the post instead of exhibiting them. Mail art became the independent way to snub the gallery system and all those attempting establish themselves as 'art critics'. Mail art decried all canons of taste and with the price of a stamp being the fee for a one-man-one-piece exhibition between sender and receiver. Kurt Schwitters, Marcel Duchamp, other Dadaists and certain Italian Futurists used this practice but mail art in its current format is generally attributed to Ray Johnson and the formation of his New York Correspondence School. It has unwritten rules: no entry fee/ no returns/ free documentation to participants involved in a 'call' / no judging / no critique and seeks to be the most welcome 'present', being about 'the economy of gifts'.

This part of the exhibition features selected mail art and Zines from the collection of South African artist Cheryl Penn and includes the following artists:

Cleo Allan (USA)  
Ernie Bar (Germany)  
Richard Baudet (France)  
Peter Clarke (South Africa)  
Ryosuke Cohen (Japan)  
Jean-Pierre BraincellsComes (France)  
C T CHEW (USA)  
David Dellafiore (Australia)  
"E" Ambassade D'Utopia (France)  
Karl Friederick Hacker (Germany)  
MA Book Object - Edition Footura black Isabelle Paris (France)  
Ruud Janssen (Netherlands)  
Pieter Kaufmann (Switzerland)  
Susanna Lackner / The Assembling Magazine of Planet Susannia (Germany)  
Theo Nelson (Canada)  
Jurgen O. Olbrich (Germany)  
PC TICTAC / sPMATSzine / Zine in a Box (Germany)  
Cheryl Penn (South Africa)  
Guido Vermeulen (Belgium)  
Marie Wintzer (Japan)

Recently I have observed many signs that make me feel as if Mail Art is drawing to a close, and that there are many past publications that could be seen as 'compilations' of Mail Art. Quite a few predecessors of Mail Art have passed away, including Ray Johnson (USA), G Deisler (Germany), Carlo Pittore (USA) and others. This is probably also because exchange by mail in the age of computers is considered primitive, and after the end of the COLD WAR between the East and the West, the necessity of correspondence between those two different worlds has been lost.

#### 14. Mail Art Makes the World a Town - Cheryl Penn



I began the zine Mail Art Makes the World a Town in order to celebrate the first EVER Mail Art exhibition in South Africa. I thought that perhaps it would just be an edition of one or two, but submissions kept arriving until the post office collapsed which put an end to that exercise! There was a visual poetry edition, an asemic edition – exciting and expensive times! Zines are generally self-published/produced or collated from contributors by the conceptualizer of the project.

The term ‘mail art makes the world a town’ was inspired by a series of lines from the

Novgorod Codex, the oldest precisely dated East Slavic book (11th Century). It consists of three bound wooden tablets containing four pages once filled with wax. Its owner had written probably hundreds of palimpsest texts into the wax which had scratched the wood. Only certain lines are translatable including:

The world is a town in which heretics are excluded from the church...

The world is a town in which blameless people are excluded from the church...

There are many such lines and I pondered the notion that so long ago this person with no name already had an idea of a global concept. We’ve moved far beyond the historic introduction of the photocopy machine into art methodology. Technology enables us to reach and touch the best the artistic world has to offer on every continent. To me, zines are the perfect gathering place for mail art. All the artists and their work are presented in a coherent, cohesive collection. The quality of zines I have contributed to indicate that perhaps they are the quintessential mail art artist’s books.

#### 15. Erni Bar (Germany)



Penn met Erni very early on in the halcyon days of mail art on IUOMA (International Union of Mail Artists). He was quite the character! He sent tea, popcorn, biscuits, postcards, letters, collages, books and debris through the mail – as mail art - he even formed his own fan club. Like Erni, everything was loud and generous. He can’t be tracked down these days, but she’s sure he is still sending work from his mail art turret. Set of 3 cards and 2 envelopes and one postage envelope. Hand cut rubber stamp on main envelope which reads Erni Bar Fan Club. “Feed art to the world/Pedestrian Speech Act”.

## 16. Karl Friederick Hacker



### **MA Book Object - Edition Footura black**

Unique Mail Art Book Object, bound with commercial hinges dated 2019. Cover, which formed the envelope, is of thin corrugated board. Made of mostly A3 envelopes with stamps and addresses including packaging materials.

## 17. Wolfgang Günther (Nula Horo) Germany



Unique wooden, shaped, hinged book with 20cm ruler on cover. Text is burnt into wood. Carved wooden rhino on reverse. Signed and dated 2014.

“The 5 reasons why I am involved in Mail-Art since 1980:

- political (peace, human rights, democracy, social justice)
- ecological (non-dissipation of resources)
- artistic (concrete, visual poetry)
- medical (psychological)
- linguistic (esperanto)”

## 18. Guido Vermeulen (Belgium)



Guido was an extra-ordinary mail artist. His guidelines were: BACK TO BASICS, NO RULES, NO JUDGMENT, NO CONTROL or LEADERSHIP, NO JURIES! NO MONEY OR COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION OF ART, DEVELOPMENT OF A GLOBAL AND ETERNAL NETWORK, NETWORKING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE MAILING OF ART, NO RETURNS BUT EXCHANGE, PROJECTS, EXHIBITIONS, DOCUMENTATIONS, PROJECTS CAN BE LIMITED IN TIME OR ONGOING, ARTISTAMPS, RUBBER STAMPS, COLLAGES, FREE MEDIUM AND TECHNIQUE, ARTIST BOOKS, VISUAL POETRY, ARTIST MONEY (Flux bucks), ADD and PASS ON, ADD PASS ON AND RETURN, COPY or XEROX or FAX art, DIGITAL art, ATC or ARTIST TRADING CARDS, COLLABORATIONS,

COMPILATIONS, ASSEMBLIES and other magazines. COPYLEFT instead of COPYRIGHT, so the free distribution of images and texts become worldwide possible.

“I suppose you could characterize Guido's painting style as expressionist. I know he is very interested indreams as a source for art and poetry, and these particular chapter pages seem like shadowy dream corridors filled with shifting images and scenes. The

Michaux quotes work as a counterpoint, Guido's art is taking over when the limits of language have been reached (De Villo Sloan (USA))”.

He did many series of chapbooks/pamphlets and zines, including his *Faces* series and was the editor of FRIOUR Magazine. He died in 2011.

## 19. Theo Nelson (Canada)



A life-long fan of radio, Nelson began volunteering at CJSW in the city of Calgary, Alberta, Canada in 2013. He was offered a chance to do a radio show. He asked, "Can I do anything?" The answer was yes, and The Quizzical Suns Musical Revue was born. The show was three and a half hours once a week in the wee hours of Thursday mornings. The program was mostly music but there was a story behind it because Nelson wasn't interested in just doing a music show. In a fictional earth, Theo had a very strange brain lesion. It allowed two-dimensional avatars to cross a dimensional divide from the Republic of Whimsy to Theo. The avatars all appeared as little suns with a questioning look on their faces - the Quizzical Suns. They became his co-hosts that communicated to him through word balloons. Many things happened and more than a few characters were introduced during the two-year run of the show. To this day, Nelson brings Theo and the Quizzies, as he has taken to calling them, back for special shows. Usually the shows will be for CJSW's annual funding drive and the show for this year's funding drive promises to be quite entertaining (Email to Penn dated 4/10/2022).

## 20. John Bennett



A unique book with commercial wire binding comprising the envelopes of John Bennett (USA). Some of his *sendings* are interspersed between the opened envelopes (including the days of swapping shopping lists...). Other envelopes are partially opened to form pockets for his TLPs. This is book 2 in the series.

Born east of the East River to the murmuring anxiety of waning victory celebrations, bathed in commercially funded electro-magnetic mythologies, bound by beneficent indifference to flit, flail, and fritter my way through atavistic Alexandrian scrolls, I am no artist; I am no scholar; I am a weak lunatic pulse surfing the intellectual float. If this does not meet expectations, let me know. I'll try to knock out more. For the last five years, I have done almost nothing but anti-Trump postcards. My mantra was "You can't satirize a parody, and you can't shame the shameless, but you can vilify the vile. Vilify Now!" (from an email to Penn 20/2/2021).

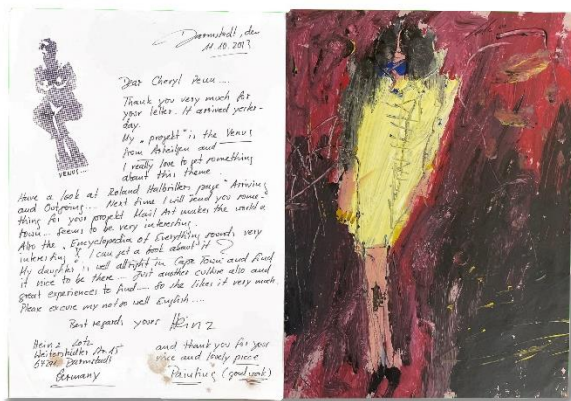
## 21. Isabelle PARIS (France)



Mail Art Envelope to advertise an envelope exhibition.

In a communication with Penn, Paris states: "I would be delighted that we became friends through the post-office. And I would like very much that 5000 expected visitors (we hope!) can admire one of your envelopes".

## 22. Heinz Lotz (Germany)



Lotz was born in 1955 and studied at Wiesbaden and Darmstadt. Since 1985 he has lived and worked in Darmstadt as a freelance artist, and where he established Edition Atelier Heinz W. Lotz. He has staged several exhibitions in Germany and around Europe and creates cover art for several clients. At the start of 2019 he started his own label to present his small handmade editions. Lotz's interests are in the theme of Venus: *Venus from Heinz*, is a past project and *Venus in Arheilgen* is shown here.

## 23. Cleo Allan (USA)



This is Book 2 of 11 dated 2013. Assemblage titled *Retainer of Possibilities*. In a note which came with assemblage, Allan states:

"These collage-poems are from a series of automatic and culled poems (lines/stanzas pulled from longer poems). The latter mean to emphasize the nature of constructs of meaning & the malleability of such via context. These short, blunt bursts hope to essentially, eliminate context in an attempt at *allowance*. I wanted to create a flavor, a tone – an Atmosphere as it were' a space rife with *possibility*, conducive to contemplation... (Language language language – the potency of brevity sometimes – A

word. A phrase. Period. *The emphasis*. Punctuation. As in: staccato sibilance). (cognitive dissonance.) By juxtaposing these words/ideas with (seemingly...) incongruous images, I strove towards an essence regarding the nature of thought – the innately tangential nature of the human mind".

## 24. Marie Wintzer (Japan)

Two square photographs of scaffolding by Cheryl Penn with a response to each by Marie Wintzer.

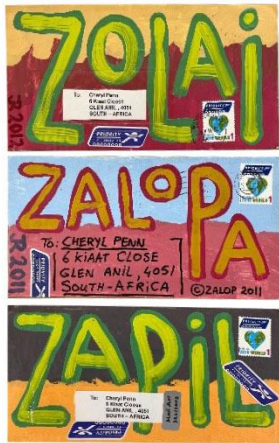


Responses are in the form of a small map book with fine thread, laminated pages, Japanese paper, fabric, appropriated text and pages of music as well as a unique book titled *'drink this baby, its atomic soda it will blow your mind back to where it was'*.

**Double sided accordion with collage, wax, thread appropriated a paper and an envelope dated December 2012**

## 25. Ruud Janssen (Netherlands)

Janssen studied mathematics and physics before becoming active in mail art in 1980. From 1994 till 2001 he



conducted interviews with Fluxus and mail artists (termed 'mail interviews'). Such interviews have been published on the web and in booklets from 1996. He is also the originator and maintainer of IUOMA

– International Union of Mail-Artists – started in 1988, and now a well-known site amongst mail artists. But Fluxus and Mail-Art are not the same. Fluxus is the network started with George Maciunas and that led through another thought to the mail-art network where artists communicate and send and receive their art in a direct way. No need for an in-between contact, also no judging of the works. All is accepted in a mail-art project.

The IUOMA is a kind of Fluxus Score. The original score is placed besides this text and deals with the inventing and making new words. IUOMA is such a word that has grown over the years into a union that has thousands of 'members' that make it a real network.

So a word comes first, and then try to invent a new one and give it meaning. Promote the words and get it into the head of as many others as possible. Examples are shown here: e.g, the Fluxus word *ZALOP*. Penn decided to follow up on this word and made it a well-known word with the specific meaning. So the connection between a simple Fluxus Score that has been going on for decades is that it resulted in certain words that actually have started new groups, ideas, and illusions (from a communication between Ruud Janssen, Breda, and Cheryl Penn, 29-9-2012).

Fluxus Words are provided by Janssen, and the meanings are determined by Penn. The collection holds the following words: ZOLAI, ZALOPA, ZADIL, ZOLIP, ZALUP, ZULAP, ZALOPY, ZALIP, ZALO, ZALOP, ZALOPAS, JAPOL, ZOPOL, ZOLEP, ZALOPU

An Example of ascribed meaning: *ZOLEP* - A Dead End. As in – you are wandering/wondering at the labyrinth of life. You think you're HERE but, it's a Dead End, this place of in-between.

## 26. Ryosuke Cohen (Japan)



*Brain Cell Repulsion* is a mail art project begun by Cohen in June 1985. The project is a networked art project where individual artists contribute stamps, stickers, drawings or other images. These are sent through the mail to Cohen, who assembles and prints them as part of each cell. He prints 150 copies (30 x 42 cm) with a small silkscreen system called a Cyclostyle (now out of production). Prints from each edition are assembled into sets of 30 consecutive editions and sent to artists and Mail Art shows around the world along with a documentation list of worldwide contributors. More than nine hundred editions have been published.

Cohen describes the origin of the project:

I title my work *Brain Cell*, because the structure of a brain through a microscope looks like the diagram of the Mail Art network. Thousands of Neurons clung and piled up together are just like the Mail Art network, I believe. *Brain Cell* is an art experiment in the vein of networked mail art where a network expands from A, copied, forwarded and even returned to the originator. This produces a series of cybernetic cells, which can interact in a non-linear order. *Brain Cell* enlisted over 6,000 contributors from 80 nations between 1985 and 2002.

## 27. Zine in a Box



Patrizia (who also goes by the moniker TICTAC) and Penn become friends over 10 years ago, meeting through their mutual connection with mail art. Penn describes her as “a silversmith by trade and meticulous beyond any artist I have ever met.”

The *Zine in a Box* series is an art zine with original works from international participants and contained in a box made by hand. The boxes themselves are works of art. At this point there have been 21 editions with each participant receiving one of the editions.

## 28. Carl [C.T.] CHEW (USA)



Painted stamped and franked envelope with Post office cancellations of Cinderella stamps 12/3/2013

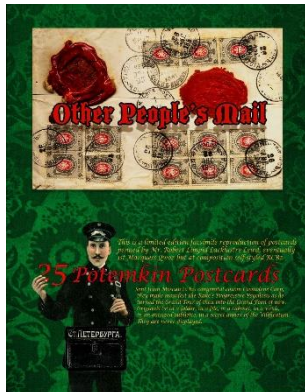
Carl has taught science and maths, obtained a BSc Zoology and an MFA in Printmaking and Video at the University of Washington. According to Penn he “has exhibited in everything, everywhere.”

Hi Cheryl Penn! So nice to hear from you. I'm sorry the post office is bankrupt, ours is quite a bit more dysfunctional than it was 20 years ago. I like email as a way to communicate. I'm pretty sure you get my email updates periodically. It's a lot of work to document and catalog Mail Art. I personally wasn't up for it so I sent boxes of my work to other people who indicated they were more into documenting and archiving. You are right, all the exhibition posters are fake. Well, they really exist on paper, poster sized and most of them with



two or more copies. ... even if I didn't have shows at exciting museums I could still pretend I did! And that morphed into creating posters for fake shows that friends might have. All the best, Carl (from an email to Penn dated 1 Oct 2022).

### 29. RcbZ (USA)



Cover of the series of 25 Potemkin Postcards

For the purposes of this exercise, mail-art shall mean a single artifact created by one person and sent at the cheapest rate through a postal system to another person. I take such artifacts, a fancy way to say postcards, seriously. Postcards per se, however, are not necessarily mail-art. Postcards must undergo transmogrification to become mail-art. Every postcard consists of front, back, and postage. Those combinations of these three elements which have been produced to create a coherent conceptual scaffold are called mail-art. Aesthetics need not apply. Every postcard must also have a sender and intended recipient. The sender serves the recipient in all ways. Complete transmogrification takes place only when the fusion of artifact and recipient sets off sympathetic synaptic sambas. Ideally, and who aspires to less? such co-cogitations extend themselves imaginably.

### 30. Peter W. Kaufmann (Switzerland)



Kaufmann was born in Zurich on 4 July 1945 and died on 12 October 2019. He lived and worked as co-owner of an international operating bureau for architecture near Zurich. He has been involved in Mail Art since 1989. His works arise out of 'situations'. With the help of computer-based image editing he made *artistamps* and 'stamps of distinctive diction'. By being in contact with the world-wide Mail Art network and other international Mail Artists, his *artistamps* often show a reflection of the works sent to him. Every year dozens of these *artistamps* were produced in small editions and then sent to selected artists. "Cow f man ism" was a crucial part of his work

as it is based on a pun using his own name.

### 31. Susanna Lackner (Germany)



The *Arnolfini Archivum* and Planet Susannia produced 51 assembling magazines [Zines] between 2000 and 2017 but Lackner also claims to have "42 odd years of mail art, networkings and related postal ephemera from the A.1. Waste Paper Co. Ltd."



### 32. PC (TICTAC) Germany

*Artiststamps*, also called 'Cinderellas' because they have no official postage value, are the artist's interpretation of a postage stamp as an artistic medium. Mostly found in mail art, *artiststamps* have many characteristics. It's debatable who the first artist to produce them was as they have been produced since the late 1800s. At that time, fine artists were commissioned to make advertising posters in postage stamp form. Later, in 1919, the German Dada artist Raoul Hausmann affixed a self-portrait postage stamp on a postcard. This started a long and rich mix of great artists and *artiststamps*. Messages conveyed by *artiststamps* characteristically range from political subversion, irony, and gentle humor to satire, eroticism, and fantasy.

Many *artiststamps* are issued by their own imaginary countries.

A note which came with the box [shown] states:

Dear sTAMPSziners i am so glad we are back in action...it took a very long time covid pandemic took over our normal life and we are still dealing with the consequences, ...and who would have ever imagined that the same masks that are saving us are causing a big damage to our environment? it also might surprise you to find included in this edition 6 a set by Tiziana Baracchi just before her sudden passing in 2018, she sent me a few sets for future zines. unfortunately the world pandemic was a big stop to my mail art activities. i will send this edition to Ambasciata deVenezia's Archive, that Tiziana and her husband Giancarlo Da Lio, have founded and he is still curating.

## *Kim Lieberman and postal art*

When I began studying Fine Art, and launched myself into conceptual art, all my frequent, extensive, and youthful travelling seemed to coalesce when I created my first postal work. Life and Art, and how they feed into each other seemed in synchrony.

In the first postal work, I posted letters to every place I had ever slept a night. I felt this was a way to touch base with all the geographically located experiences that I had gone through. In this way, I arrived at the locus point, that nexus where everything comes together: geography, emotion, and movement.

Mail Art has served as a curative. Like a quest, it has me exploring continents, including places I will never go, together with places that I do know and love.

The envelopes themselves carry the dust and the dirt, the human touch along the way, the endless thread of connection, ultimately encompassing the whole planet.

### 33. *If you have one coin with two sides*



This was Lieberman's first work made on real postage stamp paper, with official philatelic perforations, acquired through the Philatelic Services in Pretoria. This work, and *Moving Halo*, also a printed work done at the time, lead to the blank stamp paper.

#### **Blank Stamp Paper**

Having completed the printed works she had planned with the industrial machine-oriented Philatelic Services paper acquired from Pretoria, Lieberman still had a pile of official postage stamp paper left over. Looking around the factory she asked them to perforate it blank – with no image. An unusual request which they allowed. And from this perforated stamp paper came decades worth of work.

### 34. *Whale | World*



*Drawings in Post* was a series of works in which an image was placed on a map. Where a town or city intersected with any outline of the image, an envelope was posted to that location. The envelopes for this work were bought from a large international postage stamp expo at Gallagher Estate. It was *The Year of the Ocean* and thus the whale envelopes, stamps and postage stamps shown here.

Many of the envelopes were 'returned to sender' from these locations and in multiple languages. As this work was made when the local postal system was still enormously active, about 85% of the posted envelopes were returned to Lieberman.

### 35. Posting Boetti | Afghanistan



The Italian artist Alighiero Boetti died in 1994. As he had spent many important years of his life in Afghanistan, he had wanted his ashes scattered at the Band-e Amir Lake. But because it was too dangerous to go to Afghanistan, this request could not be done. When Lieberman read this in the Tate Gallery's catalogue on Boetti she decided to make this work – the perfect language was post. As the lake was close to his heart, an extra envelope was added. Subsequently Lieberman told his wife Caterina Rganelli Boetti about the work, and she agreed that it made sense to use Mail Art as the medium.

### 36. Blood Relatives



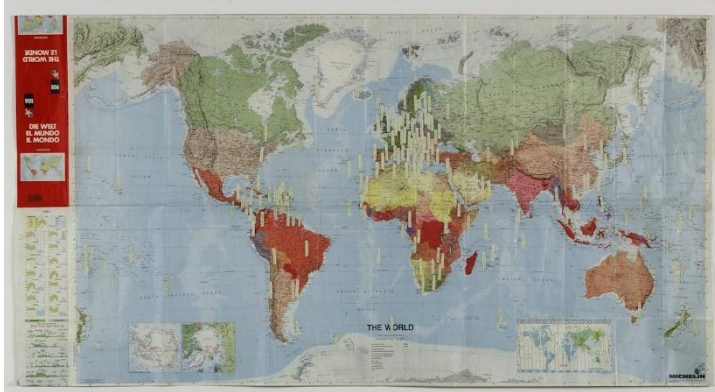
In 1999 Lieberman was in New York on the Ampersand Fellowship. She had taken a number of sheets of the blank postage stamp paper to work on. A button had fallen off her leather jacket and after visiting the Marion Goodman Gallery she spotted a haberdashery downstairs – Greenberg and Hammer. She went in, bought some Gutterman silk thread, and went back to the apartment to sew the button back on. She put the thread down on a sheet of stamp paper that was lying on the table and had the idea to sew the silk thread into the paper sheets. This became the next body of work that Lieberman worked on for many years. Here is an example that shows what that first work *Blood Relatives* (1999) looked like. This work used only blank stamps and thread and got through the postal system from New York to Johannesburg.

### 37. Pushing the Envelope

This was the first postal work Lieberman made. She posted one envelope to every place she had ever slept a night. In the early phase of the work she exhibited the first 17 returned envelopes on *HitchHiker* (1997) a pre-Biennale exhibition curated by Clive Kellner

In 1997 she exhibited this pile of returned envelopes at the Mark Coetzee Fine Art Cabinet in Cape Town. Wallpapering the walls and ceiling of the entire gallery with copies of the original envelopes.

### 38. Home



This object was Lieberman's research map. This map was used to plan the how the returned envelopes would be hung.

