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U.S. POST OFFICE STRATIFIES THE POSTCARD



As of the 15th of July, the minimum standard for postcard sizes has been set as 3 1/2 inches high and 5 inches long. All sizes smaller than that of 1/4 inch thick or less will be non-mailable. Obviously this is to accommodate mail processing equipment, namely machines, rather than people. If items are thicker or thinner, they will crumple, tear and jam the machinery. If items larger than 11 1/2 inches long or 6 1/8 inches high or 1/4 inch thick are sent, they will be subject to a surcharge in addition to the applicable postage and fees. Although it is not spelled out in the circular, it amounts to 7 cents extra. Anything smaller than 3 1/2 x 5 inches will be returned and not be accepted. Exceptions are hotel keys, identification cards and tags.

We have to give the Postal Service some credit, since the proposal was passed in June 1976, and the new size standards were not adopted until supplies of current stock, manufacturers of greeting cards and postcards, stationery suppliers, etc. would have adapted to the new regulations. Thus, it was long in coming, but it has arrived.

Some of the mail artists in the United States had a

“ball” sending undersize and oversize items through the mail before the 15th of July. Now it cannot be, and so once again Big Brother has dictated to us, and 1984 is not so far away.

We have also been informed from various sources that the Supreme Court has let stand a lower-court decision upholding the use of warrantless “mail covers,” under which the Postal Service gives law-enforcement agents information from the outside of letters.

In addition, it was brought out by Anthony Sampson in the *New York Times* that the Xerox machine and the cassette tape recording have become revolutionary instruments in world politics too. In Iran, the revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini was the first cassette revolution, according to Sampson. It was the arrival of thousands of cassettes containing the Ayatollah’s speeches that first propagated his revolutionary ideas, with cassette players in mosques, easily hidden from the ears of the secret police.

At the same time, the Xerox machine “was performing its own seditious role. When revolutionary night letters

and pamphlets arrived mysteriously at offices in Tehran, sympathetic secretaries quickly produced piles of copies and the powerful propaganda suddenly began circulating."

Electronic mail is also slated for use within three years. The Postal Service is testing to see if its concept of electronic mail will work. In other words, should the Postal Service compete with several commercial carriers which are already offering and developing such services in the United States. The Postal Service is working through COMSAT, providing overnight service linking the U.S. with London, Paris, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Brussels and Buenos Aires.

With regard to "mail covers", Buster Cleveland recently received a letter from the Inspector in Charge of the Postal Service in San Francisco referring to his envelopes which "were covered with numerous rubber stamp annotations and numerous perforated stickers, which resemble postage stamps. As an artist I suppose you are interested in the design of postage stamps. However, with such stickers affixed all over the envelope, it is difficult for such mail to be properly handled at a post office, and it becomes questionable in view of a postal law which pertains to the counterfeiting of postage stamps."

The Inspector thus sent Buster Cleveland a reproduction of the recommended arrangement of addressee information on envelopes with proper postage affixed to the upper right hand corner of the envelope. "If you do not wish your mail to be delayed and questioned, I suggest you use this arrangement on your envelopes. You should leave the face of the envelope free of other matter in order to insure speedy processing of your letters." Big Brother is surely upon us. So mail artists, beware of your local postal inspector and hug a mailman today!

SOME THOUGHTS ON MAIL ART

Robert Rehfeldt, 110 Berlin-Pankow, Mendelstr. 19, DDR- German Democratic Republic writes:

ART FREE ON DELIVERY

It was Marcel Duchamp who in 1916 thought of sending his ideas by postcard. Ever since, the number of mailmen who are art experts has grown steadily. In the middle of the last century the growth of artists' writings closely connected with progressive ideas of the time became more and more obvious. And as artists' potential grew, so grew the number of their publications and manifestoes.

The artists, however, were also aware of their "natural" isolation due to individual work in studios. They tried to overcome it by postal conversations with other artists.

The art postcard reflects in many ways the era in which it was composed. But it also shows art development in different countries in all its different styles and forms.

Finally, mailart is something like a detail out of a sketchbook to be sent to friends or collectors. It reveals glimpses of different techniques, whether collage, print, assemblage or even object—all is possible. Since an art postcard can be sent unpackaged, it gives others the opportunity to ponder its message. The possessor of this little artist's communique is well aware of its value. Meanwhile, numerous exhibitions show the importance of this medium, in which the still un-



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known creator of such cards also has the opportunity to exhibit. Shows of this kind stimulate still further exhibitions, which again increases the demand—there are no limits to possible extensions here.

What for me, however, is a very important fact is that human beings—artists as well as the laity—can meet each other over great distances, despite not knowing each other personally, and come a bit closer in the sense of human understanding by giving signs of peaceful neighborliness, whatever their differences in belief. Artists have always been the first bearers of new tidings—we ought to see it that way, and, if possible, bearing a stamp, free on delivery. (Translated by Heide Welke)

800-pound MAIL ART FROM LOS ANGELES

Recently, a facsimile of a one-cent stamp with Thomas Jefferson's green visage on it, weighing about 800 pounds, 7 feet by 6 feet by 6 inches, and made of concrete, appeared in the parking lot of the U.S. Postal Service's parking lot in downtown Los Angeles. Faintly carved into one corner was the name M. Wallace. After carting the heavy mail to the Property Division of the Police Department's Parker Center, the police next day found out that the work was created by Mike Wallace as a student at California State University, Northridge last year; that he left it in the parking lot as a protest against the "inefficiency" of the postal system; that rejecting the donation, the U.S. Postal Service let the artist take the green sculpture away if he were free of any criminal charges or towing fines. And so it came to pass.

LIGHTWORKS ENVELOPE SHOW Exhibition Catalog

The Catalog for the **LIGHTWORKS ENVELOPE SHOW** is now available for \$2.50 from Lightworks Magazine, P.O. Box 7271, Ann Arbor, MI 48107. A finely designed booklet, with an actual envelope superimposed on the cover, the essay by Ken Friedman on "Notes on Correspondence Art," and Excerpts from the forthcoming history of Correspondence Art by Mike Crane, add lustre to this handsome catalog. A bibliography is included, as well as the names and addresses of all participants in the show. In addition, there are many envelopes illustrated in this important contribution.

MORE MAIL ART NEWS

Tohei Horiike, outstanding Japanese mail artist and director of the Freedom Research Center, has recently published a set of postcards commemorating a Dada Party in San Francisco on 13 May 1979. The set sells for \$2.00.

In addition, he has published *Rubber Stamp Art*, a publication of edition shimizu, which is available for \$3.00. Both items are available from Artworks, 66 Windward Ave., Venice, CA 90191 or from the artist, whose present address in the United States is c/o Eleanor Kent, 544 Hill Street, San Francisco, CA 94114.

■ David Zack, 3033 W. 23rd, 1A, Coney Island Station, NY 11224 announces the Copenhagen Correspondence Convention Conference, a network project, to be held 2 May 1980, with mail to be sent to Helle Behrendt, Trane-garden Community Art Library, Hallerup, Denmark.

The Monster Mail Manifestation in Amsterdam is also to be held in May, 1980.

For more information, write to David Zack.

■ Geoffrey Cook, P.O. Box 18274, San Francisco, CA 94118 reports that through two unconfirmed unofficial sources, we have discovered that Jorge Caraballo and Clemente Padin have been released on parole. Presently, Julien Blaine, the French ambassador and the American ambassador to Montevideo are working in concert to try and obtain emigration from Uruguay for Caraballo/Padin and their families. For more information, write to Geoff Cook.

MAIL ART: A SURVEY

Gary Allen in New York City sent out a questionnaire to many mail artists asking them vital statistics such as age, sex, the use of a pseudonym, how long the artist has been involved in mail art, how much mail is received each week and how much is sent, the media, how many shows were entered, etc. As a result, the following statistics have been gathered for your edification:

Of the 50% who responded to the questionnaires, 73% were male, 27% were female, and none declined to answer.

The average age was 32.84 years, the youngest 17, the oldest was 74. If these two extremes are disregarded, the

corrected average age becomes 31.74 years.

56% claimed to be heterosexual, 12% homosexual, 12% bisexual, and 20% declined to answer. Only males declined.

60% of those who responded said that they use pseudonyms. Only one person claimed to use pseudonyms exclusively. 80% said that they use their real names. 8% declined.

7.36 years seems to be the average number of years spent doing mail art. However, since two respondents claimed to have been at it for over 30 years, the figure is somewhat inflated. By disregarding those two responses, and averaging the rest, a more reasonable figure of 4.85 years is obtained.

Only one person declined to answer regarding professional involvement in art other than mail art. Everyone else said yes. Typical art occupations are college professor, graphic artist, illustrator, printmaker.

Average number of correspondents per mail artist: 68. Lowest was 3, highest was 300.

By coincidence, the average number of pieces mailed each week equalled the number received, 15.4. 68% of the respondents said that they received different amounts than they sent.

The respondents participated in 18.14 mail art shows last year.

With regard to media, the media chosen were first postcards, then letters, a tie between found objects, photos, stickers, books, and trash; third was drawing or painting; fourth was conceptual; fifth, Xerox; 6th, rubberstamp and seventh, stamps.

60% said that they have initiated others into mail art. They averaged 4.4 attempts each. 48% of those initiated are still at it, 8% are not.

For more details, or to initiate you to write to mail artist extraordinaire, Gary Allen's address is 808 West End Avenue, no. 311, New York, NY 10025.

A.R.T.
ART RECYCLING TERMINAL
Bouckaertstr. 8 - B-8790 WAREGEM - BELGIUM

CALLING ALL POSTCARD ARTISTS! SEND A POSTCARD TO BARBARA Exhibition to take place at Loyola University's Water Tower Campus Gallery, 820 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago. Send cards (no returns—all exhibited) by 15 September 1979 to Barbara Aubin, 1322 West Cornelia, Chicago, IL 60657. Catalog to all participants. Opening and lectures planned.