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## MAIL-ART ON WIKIPEDIA

(selection)

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org>

When the electronic telecommunications network known as the Internet gave rise to e-mail art, conventional mail-art artists came to refer to the international postal service as the 'paper net' or snail-mail net. When a group of these artists are in some way linked through their works they are collectively referred to as a Mail Art Network or the Eternal Network.

The Mail-Art Network concept has roots in the work of earlier groups, including the Fluxus artists and the notion of 'multiples' or artworks manufactured as editions. Most commonly, Mail-Art Network artists have made and exchanged postcards, designed custom-made stamps or 'artistamps', and designed decorated or illustrated envelopes. But even large and unwieldy three-dimensional objects have been known to have been sent by Mail-Art Network artists, for many of whom the message and the medium are synonymous.

Fundamentally, mail art in the context of a Mail Art Network is a form of conceptual art. It is a 'movement' with no membership and no leaders.

Mail artists like to claim that mail art began when Cleopatra had herself delivered to Julius Caesar in a rolled-up carpet (although this was neither mail nor art). However, perhaps the initial genesis of mail art was in postal stationery, from which mail art is now typically distinguished (if not defined in its broadest sense). The first example of postal stationery was the pictorial design created by the English artist William Mulready (1786-1863) for mass printing-press reproduction on the first stock of prepaid postage wrappers or envelopes produced for the launch of the Penny Post in Britain in 1840.



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## MAIL-ART

### SHORT STATEMENTS ABOUT MAIL-ART BY RUUD JANSSEN

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#### *New Generations?*



Source: Obvious Front

# NEW GENERATIONS?

I wrote a text about the 5 generations in mail-art years ago. Is this still true or has the Internet generated a new generation of mail-artists? I don't know but ask the question.

## THE 5 GENERATIONS

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Sometimes the mail artists are divided up into generations. **The first generation;** Ray Johnson who started in the NYCS with a selective group he choose to write to and asked them to play the game with him.

Of course there is also **the zero generation.** Artists that already used the mail system for communication, art & play (Marcel Duchamp, Van Gogh maybe?) where individual artists were in contact with other artists through the mail in a creative way on a one-to-one basis.

**The second generation** in the 60's - 70's when FLUXUS joined up and a selective group experimented with the mail system.

**The third generation** where mail art rapidly grew in 70's - 80's because of the exhibitions and publications within the mail art network that spread the news to newcomers (this is where I joined the mail art network for the first time, and lots of the people I am still in contact with nowadays are from this 3rd generation). Not a limited group anymore, but the concept that anybody could take part and be a member of the mail art network really

took shape. This lead to the Congress-year in 1986, where anybody could organize a congress, as long as two or more mail artists had a meeting at a certain place.

**The fourth generation,** after the congress in 1986 organized by H.R. Fricker and Günther Ruch from Switzerland, where the mail art population grew into a very large group. Every networker only knows his selective group with whom he/she is in contact. An enormous wealth of projects and publications are made in the end of the 80's and the beginning of the 90's. The end of the 80's and the beginning 90's was also the gradual beginning of....

**The fifth generation,** where communication was done with the use of computers. Mark Bloch (USA), Charles François (Belgium) and Ruud Janssen (in the Netherlands) already were working with BBS's to send out electronic mail. One of the congresses in the DNC-year 1992 was done by Charles and me with a session of computer-congresses where we exchanged our thoughts without meeting. Our computers were our tools. In 1991 there was also the first networking-project REFLUX that uses the then elite system of internet, but in 1994 till now the internet became a real option to communicate for the 'wealthy' countries.

## STILL TRUE?

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The text of the 'five generations' was written in 1996. Is it still true? Has nothing changed in the past decade? On the Internet newcomers discover mail-art as an art form on the many websites, forums and groups. They look for

mailing-addresses and start their first explorations. But some also practice only the digital form of communication in a creative way. Is that mail-art? Is the field for communication-artists just broader? Is Internet-art the new form that will embrace the mail-art spirit?

*ONLY FIVE GENERATIONS? IN WHICH DO YOU BELONG? IN WHICH BELONG YOUR CONTACTS?*

## SIXTH GENERATION

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The logic is simple. When you define 5 generations, a sixth generation will come one of these days (or have they started already?). If so, mail-art continues. If not, we are dying out. What is the essence of this sixth generation?

## REACTIONS

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Normally mail-artists tend to disagree with texts written by other mail-artists. This causes more texts written by others. A fascinating element of mail-art. I always like to read these reactions. Even when I don't agree. So when you react, do it in the form of a publication and just send me a copy.....

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